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SECRET NEW DS3 SUV

EXCLUSIVE IMAGES

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morph into super-SUV



PLUS

TESTED New MINI Clubman

Can big MINI ‘out-Golf’ a Golf?



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New Porsche 911 Turbo REVEALED

More power, more tech and new look

PLUS Shhhh... We hitch a ride in next year's new Merc E-Class ● Infiniti's BMW 4 Series rival scooped

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Online this week



First drive verdict on Lexus' sharp new RX

FOLLOWING the sharply styled NX, Lexus has applied the same origami surfacing theme to its big SUV contender, the RX.

In keeping with the firm's 'no diesels' policy, only a 2.0-litre turbo petrol engine and a petrol hybrid pairing a 3.5-litre V6 with an electric motor will be available.

Three trims are on offer, with the basic petrol undercutting the entry-level BMW X5 diesel by £3,000. Head online to see whether we think the new SUV has the beating of German rivals.

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AUTO EXPRESS ROAD TESTS

All Auto Express tests are carried out at private proving grounds where cars are driven to the limit and performance tested using Racelogic Vbox computer timing equipment. Auto Express also assesses the cars over many miles of mixed public roads before delivering its Road Test Verdict.

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BMW's future is increasingly tech-led – including buying



AE IT'S always worthwhile catching up with Ian Robertson – BMW's sales and marketing boss and the only Brit to sit on the company's board in Munich. For the record, he's also a former number one in the Auto Express Brit List and member of the Auto Express Hall of Fame.

Robertson is something of a trailblazer and hugely influential among his German colleagues. He played a massive part in the development and launch of BMW's 'i' brand and talks enthusiastically about the development of autonomous driving tech: "I use it every day in my 7 Series," he told me.

"At the moment we're feet off with active cruise control and briefly hands off with lane-keeping assist. Next we'll be eyes off and, finally, brain off!"

Robertson is massively excited about the future, saying next year's centenary celebrations for BMW are more about the future than the past. "We'll see more in the way of digitalisation in the next five years than we've seen in the last 100 – both in the way we make and the way we sell our cars," he said.

That last point is certainly true – Robertson used our meting to discuss the launch of BMW Retail Online. It'll allow BMW buyers to explore, spec, order, part exchange, have finance approved and delivery arranged online in the space of just 10 minutes. And BMW Geniuses – the salaried (not on commission) product experts championed by Robertson and found in BMW dealers – will be on hand from 8am until 10pm online or on the phone to help, before passing you on to dealers.

BMW says most buyers will still visit a dealer to experience the car, although as with Hyundai's shopping centre outlets, dealers may not be in the

traditional place in the future. It's all designed to make buying easier and more convenient – exactly what we want.



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EXCLUSIVE IMAGES

Secret plan for new DS 3

■ Crossover model will accompany all-new hatch to take on MINI Countryman



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AE THE DS brand revolution continues, and with the push upmarket will come a range of new products. The existing DS 3, DS 4 and DS 5 have all been revamped for 2015, but next on the agenda for PSA's newly formed luxury brand is a DS 3 SUV. Our exclusive images show how it may look.

Citroen confirmed DS would become its own premium brand last year, with ambitions similar to those Toyota had with Lexus back in the late eighties. But there's been no all-new products launched as yet, bar the DS 4 Crossback – which is essentially a jacked-up version of the revised DS 4.

However, with the demand for SUVs in China and Europe seemingly insatiable, DS is prioritising a more conventional move into that sector. And we understand that a dedicated DS 3 SUV will arrive alongside an

all-new DS 3 supermini in 2018. Given the current DS 3 was launched in 2009, it means a long lifespan for the existing MINI Cooper rival, but the wait is necessary for PSA to design a new scalable platform (known as Common Modular Platform or CMP) as a base for up to 10 new future models.

These include the two DS 3s and even the next Peugeot 208. The investment will come from PSA's alliance with Chinese state-owned brand Dongfeng.

The smaller, sportier DS 3 hatch is expected to retain the same three-door layout as before, while the SUV will get a more practical and roomier five-door design. Tell-tale DS styling touches

"Cars such as the Mazda CX-3 and forthcoming Audi Q1 will also be targets"

include the DS 3's shark fin panel (pushed back from B to C-pillar), curvaceous lines and chrome-covered hexagonal front grille, but it takes on a more purposeful stance with a raised ride height and body cladding.

Sources say DS has identified the MINI Countryman as one key rival, but that cars such as the Mazda CX-3 and forthcoming Audi Q1 will also be potential targets.

Despite the extra ground clearance, we understand that four-wheel drive won't be offered on the DS 3 SUV, as it would cost too much to adapt the modular platform from front-wheel drive. Besides, DS claims that when four-wheel drive is offered on smaller, more fashion-led SUVs such as this, it isn't often taken up by customers.

What we will see are major revisions to the current DS engine line-up, as 2017 marks the introduction of tougher Euro 6.2 emissions regulations. It's expected the relatively new 1.2-litre PureTech petrol

REAL DEAL

Brand realises the potential for expansion in SUV market, and DS 3 SUV will be a more conventional offering than DS 4 Crossback





René Demarçis

IN STYLE
Our images show how new model could look, with curvy body and chrome-adorned grille

SUV exposed



NUMERO 9 Concept from 2012 hinted at a new executive car and previewed brand's avantgarde future styling direction

So what else is coming from DS?

DS's range boom won't just stop with the DS 3 SUV. As part of plans to have six new models on sale by 2020, it's been confirmed that the brand will launch a full-size executive car as an indirect replacement for the quirky Citroen C6.

A spokesperson told Auto Express the flagship model will sit above the DS 5 as a "proper E-segment car" to take on the BMW 5 Series and Audi A6.

The new executive car will join the DS 3 SUV and also a large SUV as the brand prioritises the global saloon and SUV markets.

Future DS models will be crammed with tech to make them stand apart from German competitors. DS boss Yves Bonnefort told Auto Express earlier this year: "DS is an alliance of refinement and technology. Comfort is very important to DS and you'll see innovative new suspension systems from us in the future."

"The brand will bring a full-size executive car to the market to replace the quirky Citroen C6"

engine will be carried over with only minor efficiency tweaks, but the 1.6-litre THP petrol may see major alterations – or be dropped. Given the 2017 regulations are set to be tougher on diesels, PSA will have to invest in upgrading its 1.6-litre BlueHDi engines for the next DS 3. Both cars will be produced at the factory in Mulhouse, France.

Details are scarce on the overall cabin updates, but DS's priority to offer "refinement and avantgarde design" will likely result in improved quality. Rest assured that the company's distinctive French style will be carried over, too.

Given the premium aspirations of DS, we can expect a starting price of between £18,000 to £20,000. As a result, it'll sit ahead of the likes of the Renault Captur, but in line with Mazda's CX-3.

PAGE 72: Used DS 3 buyer's guide

FRESH LOOK

LED headlights and new air vents set new Turbo apart from predecessor



Porsche 911 Turbo charged



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AE EARLIER this year we discovered the entire Porsche 911 range would switch over to turbo power. The changes kicked off on the standard Carrera and Carrera S, and will follow with the Carrera 4 and Targa shortly. Now, however, Porsche has revealed the entirely unsurprising news that the 911 Turbo and Turbo S will keep their powerful forced-induction engines, while benefiting from a similar mid-life nip and tuck.

The facelifted 911 Turbo gets a handful of changes, including a 20bhp power hike for the 3.8-litre flat six. That means the Turbo model now boasts 533bhp and the S gets 572bhp. Both versions have a new dynamic boost function, allowing drivers to get back on the power more quickly after lifting off.

Extra power means extra performance, with the new models being two-tenths-of-a-second faster from 0-62mph than the

■ New look and 20bhp power hike for high-spec sports cars

outgoing cars. The Turbo now completes the benchmark sprint in three seconds flat, while the S shaves this to 2.9 seconds. Top speed has been improved as well, to 199mph and 205mph respectively.

There are a few styling updates to keep the range looking fresh, with LED headlights and reshaped vents being the main changes at the front, while at the rear there are new exhaust pipes, a new engine cover and reworked tail-lights. New 20-inch wheels are the biggest change when looking at the

“Changes include a 20bhp power hike for the 3.8-litre flat six, taking Turbo to 533bhp and S to 572bhp”

■ OFFICIAL

HOT STUFF

Turbo S has a 572bhp version of 3.8-litre flat six, and new dynamic boost function that lets drivers get on power early features on both models



INTERIOR

Steering wheel is similar to the design in 918 Spyder. Plus, touchscreen is at heart of 911 Turbo's vastly improved cabin. It lets drivers 'write' destinations into sat-nav with fingers



Turbo features same wheels as S for first time, and both cars get quad exhausts. Coupé and Cabriolet bodystyles are offered

es in with up to 572bhp



car in profile, with the Turbo model getting the same size wheels as the pricier S.

Inside, the most obvious change for the driver will be the new steering wheel, derived from the one in the 918 Spyder hypercar. It comes as standard with a Mode Switch, which lets you select from Normal, Sport, Sport Plus and Individual. These change the suspension, gearbox and exhaust settings – with the driver even able to mix and match different features.

The cabin also features sports seats, a seven-inch touchscreen sat-nav and infotainment system, dual-zone climate control, Bose speakers and leather. Online navigation is standard, with real-time traffic updates and satellite images displayed on the glass screen. Drivers can also 'write' sat-nav destinations on to the touchscreen with their fingers, plus smartphones can be connected using a cable, Bluetooth or Wi-Fi.

All Turbo models come with Porsche Active Suspension Management (PASM),

Porsche Stability Management (PSM) and the Sport Chrono Package as standard. A new button on the centre console activates PSM Sport Mode, which alters the system's level of interference. It's something that will appeal to owners who intend to use their Turbo on a track, allowing drivers to get closer to the car's limits without disengaging the electronics completely.

New options include a radar-based lane-change assist feature and a lift system that raises the car by 40mm at low speeds.

Fuel economy is improved in the new models, too, with the coupés claiming 31mpg and the Cabriolets 30mpg. The slight improvement on both comes as a result of small changes to the engine computer and new gear mappings.

The new Porsche 911 Turbo S will hit the road at the end of next month, after debuting at the Detroit Motor Show. Prices range from £126,925 for the Turbo coupé to £154,614 for the top-spec 911 Turbo S Cabriolet.



Striking two-door spied undisguised; 3.0t badges on wings hint at V6 power

Infiniti Q60 coupé revealed

■ Spies catch new Audi A5 rival on test ■ Set to debut at Detroit show; 3.0t badge hints at twin-turbo V6

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AE THE 2016 small premium coupé race is on. We've just driven the new Mercedes C-Class Coupé (Issue 1,396), while Audi's next A5 is on the way and Lexus will launch its RC Coupé range, too. But Infiniti is also getting in on the act with the Q60, which we've spotted for the first time undisguised.

Nissan's premium division previewed the sleek two-door with the Q60 concept at the 2015 Detroit Motor Show. Now a source has told us it's "highly likely" next month's event will showcase the finished article.

Although the production car is slightly toned down from the concept, the overall



Low roof and rising shoulders will help Q60 stand out when it hits dealers later next year

Automedica

shape remains the same. The nose is reminiscent of the Q50 saloon's, but from the windscreen back the coupé's low roofline and rising shoulders give a more athletic look. And while we haven't seen the interior yet, we can expect it to be very similar to the concept's.

Drivetrain details have yet to be revealed, but look closely at the side of the car in these images and you'll spot 3.0t badging, suggesting the launch engine will be the concept's new twin-turbo 3.0-litre V6. Although power is unconfirmed, expect around 400bhp, as the 3.5 V6 Hybrid produces 364bhp.

If the Q60 is to succeed in Europe, however, Infiniti will need to offer buyers a range of smaller-output turbocharged petrol and diesel engines.

Battery boost takes BMW i3 further

BMW'S all-electric i3 is now set to take owners further on a charge, thanks to battery tweaks to increase driving range.

Although the company has confirmed full details will be announced "by the end of the year", Auto Express understands the range will increase to around 130 miles thanks to an upgraded lithium-ion battery pack. That's around 30 miles further than the current i3 with its 22kWh battery pack.

The update will apply to both the i3 Range Extender and pure electric models, but BMW refused to reveal whether the tweaks will change the amount of time it takes to charge the cars, or indeed bring a price increase. We can expect the company to retain the option of an 80 per cent fast charge on the i3, though, allowing owners to top up their cars at motorway service stations for long trips.



OFFICIAL
Upgraded battery pack will give i3 and i3 REx longer electric range

...As Alpina ups power to 591bhp

ALPINA has announced its B5 Biturbo will be getting even quicker, thanks to performance upgrades across the range.

The BMW 5 Series-based saloon's 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8 now has 591bhp and 800Nm of torque, giving 0-62mph in 4.2 seconds and a 204mph top speed.

It starts at 108,600 Euros (£76,000), but UK prices will probably be higher. Like all Alpinas, the car (below) is built along the regular BMW production line and covered by a full BMW warranty.



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FIRST RIDE

New Mercedes E-Class hi

■ We get early taste of large exec ■ 'More refined than S-Class', says engineering boss

AE Kyle Fortune

THE camouflage stickers can't fool anyone; this disguised car is obviously a Mercedes. Say hello to the new 2016 E-Class then, internally designated as W213, the code by which fans will forever refer to it.

Usually, the E-Class is a diversion from the somewhat busily styled outgoing model. It doesn't just share its looks with the C-Class,

either, as the E-Class is based on the Mercedes MRA platform that underpins its smaller relative as well as the GLC SUV. In time, E-Class Coupé, Cabriolet, Estate and AMG versions will join the family, too.

Driving out of LA on tortured concrete roads with Michael Kelz, chief engineer E-Class/CLS/GLC, at the wheel is very revealing. Kelz said of the new E: "For

New model shares a platform with C-Class and the GLC SUV



...As racy new A 45 marks F1 dominance

MEANWHILE, Mercedes-AMG has marked its success in the Formula One World Championship with a special A 45 hot hatch.

Like the 2015 F1 car, the A 45 PETRONAS 2015 World Champion Edition gets a silver and turquoise livery (Mercedes calls it 'petrol green'). The road car also has a larger front splitter and rear roof spoiler.

You can choose from three different shades of grey paint, but 19-inch cross-spoke wheels are standard. Of course, the

alloys are grey, too, although they feature eye-catching green detailing. Inside, there are leather or fabric sports seats, plus plenty of turquoise stitching and detailing on the dashboard.

All the upgrades are cosmetic, so the A 45 still gets the same 2.0-litre four-cylinder petrol engine, seven-speed dual-clutch gearbox and four-wheel-drive system as the standard car. It's likely to go on sale in the UK next year, costing from around £46,000.

"The new A 45 uses the same 2.0-litre engine as the standard car, and is likely to cost from £46,000 in the UK"

SPIED



WILD THING
'Petrol green' livery helps A 45 special edition stand out



Our initial impression of E-Class was how quiet it is, aping its S-Class big brother

UNCOVERED

Test car wore a disguise, but our exclusive images (below) show how final production car is set to look



Milos Dvorak

ts the road

refinement, our target was the S-Class.” And the E-Class rides with a serene quietness that’s arguably better than its big brother. “There are plenty of engineers who can do sporty in the company,” admitted the E-Class chief, “but I am focused on comfort. It’s important.”

That’s not to the detriment of engagement, though. Kelz added: “The steering has to feel natural, too; I don’t like synthetic steering.” From the passenger

seat we’ll have to take his word on that for now, but the level of driver assistance means that, depending on the route, the E-Class could steer itself. Technologically it’s entirely feasible that the E-Class could drive fully autonomously, although current legislation doesn’t allow that.

On the long, relatively straight roads we encountered, the E-Class is clearly an easy drive, Kelz having only to brush a button on the steering wheel when occasionally

prompted, the car checking he’s still paying attention. And if he isn’t, it’ll give further warnings before slowing to a controlled stop.

The E-Class is set to be available with an extensive range of modular three, four and six-cylinder petrol engines, as well as a new four-cylinder turbodiesel, likely to be offered in several states of tune. All will drive via the nine-speed 9G-Tronic auto, while 4Matic four-wheel drive will be rolled out after the initial launch early next year.

Latest banned plates revealed



PLATE BAN

These two combinations are among those ruled out by DVLA

THE new list of banned number plates deemed too rude or distasteful by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) has been released ahead of March’s 16-plate registrations.

A number of plates starting with *B16 in the first three spots – including B16 BUT – have been ruled out as have plates prefixed with BU16 and *P16. A team of

censors at the DVLA meets twice a year – when the new plates are released – to decide upon which plates won’t be issued. Each year means there are new possibilities to offend and the DVLA has control over personalised plates, too.

The list doesn’t just include words the DVLA classes as rude. Anything that can be seen as racist, religiously offensive or

even drug related is also unavailable. A spokesman said: “The vast majority of registration numbers are available, but we have a responsibility to ensure that the combinations used do not cause offence, embarrassment or are in poor taste.”

Plates which remain on the banned list from past years include HE12 OIN, AD13 CTS and RU13 BUM.



news in brief



Get in festive spirit with prize giveaway

TO be in with a chance of winning a whole host of festive prizes, head to autoexpress.co.uk to get involved in our 12 Days of Christmas giveaway (above). In association with Carbuyer.co.uk, we’ll be running a competition each day with a different selection of prizes on offer.

Gifts up for grabs will count down in number each day, until our grand prize on 12 December. Among the goodies are model cars, books and car care hampers.

New independent NOx ratings coming

A NEW nitrogen oxide (NOx) rating scheme will be launched in early 2016 by UK specialist Emissions Analytics, to make real-world figures more transparent.

The accreditation initiative will help buyers identify cars emitting the lowest amount of harmful pollutants, and assist policymakers and manufacturers in better understanding emissions. Experts will set up the test method and review ratings. Results will first be published in 2017, and will be independent of vehicle manufacturers’ certification tests, too.

Bigger, better new Fiesta spied on test

FORD’S next-generation Fiesta has been spied testing ahead of its 2017 release.

The pre-production mule was caught using the current car’s body (below), and shows the best seller is set to get a wider track with an overall increase in size likely to move it away from the new Ka Plus.

Expect the familiar range of three-cylinder EcoBoost petrol engines and turbodiesels, plus a hot ST in 2018.

P34: Fiesta 1.0 Mounune driven



Automeia

A leap forward in reverse parking.



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How do you park in a space you can't even see?
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then assist you to park in it, whether it's parallel or
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Ford Focus can help you go further.
ford.co.uk/focus

Official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for Ford Focus Range: urban 32.1-74.3 (8.8-3.8), extra urban 49.6-91.1 (5.7-3.1), combined 41.5-83.1 (6.8-3.4). Official CO₂ emissions 159-88g/km.

The mpg figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results (EU Directive and Regulation 692/2008), are provided for comparability purposes and may not reflect your actual driving experience.

Active Park Assist is standard on Titanium X and available as an optional extra on Zetec, Zetec S and Titanium.



Go Further

Chancellor sets aside £250m for pothole repairs in next five years

- **Key motoring issues tackled in state's latest spending review**
- **Accident claims, lorry parking and eco cars also addressed**



Joe Finnerty
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@AE_Consumer

AE A PERMANENT National Pothole Fund is to be set up and minor accident claims will be reformed, following Chancellor George Osborne's joint Autumn Statement and Spending Review.

Over the next five years, the Government will spend £250million on pothole repairs – although this represents only a fraction of its own estimated £8.6billion backlog. 'Compensation culture' will also be tackled, with reforms to car accident claims. The right to general damages for minor soft-tissue injuries will be removed, as will legal costs, by transferring personal injury claims of up to £5,000 to the small claims court. Osborne called for the estimated £1 billion savings to be passed on to motorists, to cut premiums by £40-£50 a year.

Improvements will be made to Operation Stack – which caused chaos earlier this year when lorries parked on the M20 in Kent – with £250m invested in a major new permanent lorry park in the area to ease pressure on surrounding roads.

Steve Gooding, RAC Foundation director, said: "After decades of dithering, it's pleasing to see £250m allocated to keep Kent's roads clear when there's cross-Channel disruption. HGVs should be parked in permanent sites, not on motorways." The



Chancellor Osborne's latest budgetary announcements cover a diverse range of issues, including pothole repairs, Operation Stack and low-emission cars

"DfT's operational budget will fall by 37 per cent, but capital spending will be increased by 50 per cent"

removal of the three per cent diesel supplement from company cars will also be delayed until 2021, ahead of new real-world EU testing regulations.

Ultra-low-emission vehicles will continue to be supported, too, with £600m invested over the next five years. While the Department

for Transport's operational budget will fall by 37 per cent, its capital spending will be increased by 50 per cent to £61billion – "the biggest increase for a generation".

Osborne added: "It's the largest road-investment programme since the seventies – for we are the builders."

OSBORNE'S 2016 MOTORING BUDGET

□ National Pothole Fund

A fund of £250million has been pledged over the next five years to pay for pothole repairs.

□ Insurance claims

Reforms to minor accident claims to save motorists up to £50 a year on insurance premiums.

□ Operation Stack

Pressure will be eased on Kent's roads during Operation Stack, with £250m for a lorry park.

□ Diesel company cars

Removal of three per cent diesel company car supplement delayed until 2021.

□ ULEV support

Continued backing of ultra-low-emission vehicles, with £600m investment over the next five years.

McLaren 'hatch' and folding hard-top spied

AUTO Express spies have spotted two new McLarens heading to showrooms next year.

Following on from the recent launch of the entry-level 570S, the brand will introduce a GT version in 2016. It will be more practical than the standard model as a hatchback-style boot lid will replace the regular 570S's exposed engine cover and concave rear screen, freeing up extra luggage space.

Meanwhile, McLaren's next hardcore supercar has also been spied. The 675LT Spider follows on from the limited-run 675LT (the 'LT' name references the nineties' McLaren F1 Longtail), but adds a folding hard-top. As with the 675LT Coupé, it'll use the potent 666bhp 3.8-litre twin-turbo V8, giving a 0-62mph time of 2.9 seconds and a 200mph top speed.

ON TEST

Spies caught 570S GT (right) – set to be more practical than 570S (below) – as well as 675LT Spider (far right)

SPIED





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PCP REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLE

36 MONTHLY PAYMENTS	ON THE ROAD CASH PRICE	CUSTOMER DEPOSIT	NISSAN DEPOSIT CONTRIBUTION	TOTAL AMOUNT OF CREDIT	DURATION OF AGREEMENT	OPTIONAL FINAL PAYMENT	TOTAL AMOUNT PAYABLE	RATE OF INTEREST P.A. (FIXED)	4.99% APR REPRESENTATIVE
£231	£26,445	£6,060	£1,500	£18,885	37 months	£12,974	£28,850	4.99%	

X-Trail Range: URBAN 34.9-49.6mpg (8.1-5.7L/100km), EXTRA URBAN 51.4-62.8mpg (5.5-4.5L/100km), COMBINED 44.1-57.6mpg (6.4-4.9L/100km), CO₂ emissions 149-129g/km.

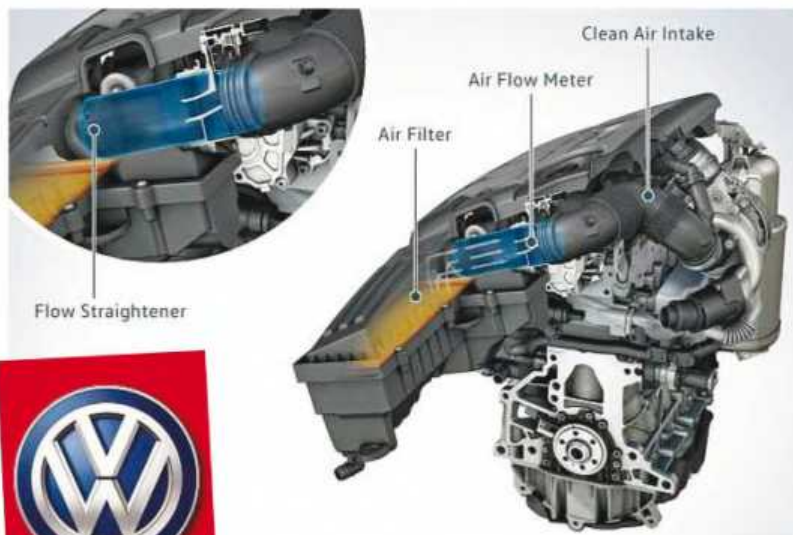
Offer valid until 4 January 2016 at participating dealers only and subject to vehicle availability. Finance provided by RCI Financial Services Limited, PO Box 149, Watford WD17 1EJ. Subject to status. Guarantees and indemnities may be required. You must be at least 18 and a UK resident (excluding the Isle of Man and Channel Islands). Terms and conditions apply, please visit www.nissan-offers.co.uk/termsandconditions at your local dealer for full details. *NISSAN DEPOSIT CONTRIBUTION OF £1,500 IS ONLY AVAILABLE WHEN TAKEN ON 4.99% PCP NISSAN FINANCE PRODUCT. Offer based on 10,000 miles pa, excess mileage 8p per mile. Offers not available in conjunction with any schemes or other offers. Vehicle price includes first registration fee and 12 months' road fund licence. **Fixed price servicing available for both finance and now cash customers. Servicing must be by a franchised Nissan dealer at specified dealers. Mileage limits from 37,500 apply - please see www.nissan-offers.co.uk/termsandconditions for servicing intervals. †Only use NissanConnect services when safe to do so. Certain remote functions require compatible phone or device; roaming and data usage charges may apply. NissanConnect smartphone app integration service subscription required but is available on a complimentary basis for two years from date of registration. For terms and conditions relating to Nissan technologies, visit www.nissan.co.uk/technologyT&Cs. Always drive carefully and attentively. MPG figures are obtained from laboratory testing, in accordance with 2004/3/EC and intended for comparisons between vehicles and may not reflect real driving results. (Optional equipment, maintenance, driving behaviour, road and weather conditions may affect the official results.) Information correct at time of going to print. Model shots shown are for illustration purposes only. Nissan Motor (GB) Ltd, The Rivers Office Park, Denham Way, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire WD3 9YS.

VW confirms details of Dieselgate engines fix



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■ 1.6-litre engines need new part ■ Software fix for other units



"In 1.6 engines, the new part will be fitted directly in front of air mass sensor, letting it return more accurate measurements"

THE FIX EXPLAINED Image shows where flow transformer or straightener will be fitted on affected 1.6-litre EA 189 diesel engines

Peugeot-Citroen bids to keep it real

PSA Peugeot-Citroen will carry out tests with campaign group Transport and Environment to publish real-world economy figures by spring 2016.

NOx and CO₂ will be tested and published by 2017, too. Transport and Environment and PSA will work on a testing methodology, with results audited independently.



Rebecca Chaplin

Rebecca_Chaplin@dennis.co.uk

Video watch

WE have a video review of the new Bentley Bentayga this week at autoexpress.co.uk/videos, plus a guide to infotainment systems.

Full video report on Bentley's Bentayga



THE Bentayga is extending Bentley's reach into the SUV market, but is it a wise business move for the brand?

The order books certainly suggest so, and as special contributor Steve Sutcliffe reported in our Issue 1,398 first drive, the quality, refinement and performance of this luxury off-roader impress. Watch his video to see and hear the Bentayga in all its glory.

Best infotainment systems reviewed



OUR ultimate guide to infotainment in Issue 1,397 featured the 10 systems consumers are asking about most.

We put them to the test across five categories: usability, performance, connectivity, sat-nav and cost. And you can see them in action by clicking on our sister website Carbuyer.co.uk.

You can watch any of our videos on your phone. Simply scan this QR code.



Optima estate caught out on test

KIA is looking to flesh out its Optima range, with a new estate version spotted for the first time here in heavy camouflage.

Our pictures show that the car won't be as sleek as the SportSpace concept from the Geneva Motor Show earlier this year, but Auto Express understands that the road car will take its name from the concept.

The Optima SportSpace will be the largest estate the brand has ever built, and it should feature the same large grille and headlights and the angled tail-lights from the updated saloon.

The addition of an estate is part of Kia's plan to expand the Optima line-up, and within 18 months we should see a four-strong range: a saloon, estate, plug-in hybrid and a hot GT model.



New model is biggest estate Kia has ever made, and is set to be badged SportSpace



Samantha has been running Audi courtesy car while TT has been in garage

Mystery squeaks and rattles hit £30,000 TT

■ **CASE STUDY** Disappointed owner left with no choice but to reject Audi after weeks in workshop

AE Martin Saarinen

REJECTING a new car is the last resort for buyers, and the process is far from straightforward. What should you do? How can you get a manufacturer to agree? And how long should it take?

Reader Samantha Marriott, of Ludgershall, Wilts, had all these questions and more with her Audi TT. She'd bought it new from Salisbury Audi in March, but the showroom-fresh shine didn't last as steering vibrations, rattles and seat squeals soon developed.

Samantha contacted her dealer to fix the issue, but it wasn't simple. "I took my car in for the service, and while it was in, I got a call to say a new part for an airbag was also required," she told us. "It ended up staying in the garage for five weeks."

Samantha had the use of a courtesy car during this time, but five weeks wasn't enough for her dealer to fix her TT's steering vibration or squeaking seat. While they're not major flaws, as Samantha said, they're unacceptable on a £30,000 premium sports car. "The mechanic told me he'd exhausted all repair avenues with the vibrating steering, and while it didn't rattle as much as before, the squeals persisted," she added.

After a third trip to the garage, where she was told she'd have to wait an unknown time for new parts to arrive, Samantha

QUALITY
Steering rattles and squeaky seats aren't major issues, as Samantha acknowledged, but they're not good enough on a £30,000 sports car



"Audi's initial offer would have left Samantha £10k out of pocket for just 4,000 miles' use in six months"

decided to reject the car. She wanted her finance payments refunded, along with her original trade-in deposit of £19,000.

Initially, Audi was willing to buy the car back, with Samantha receiving £10,000 from the sale. This would have left her over £10,000 out of pocket for just 4,000 miles

of use in six months. We didn't think these figures added up and called Audi for a revised offer. After revisiting the case, Audi quoted Samantha a new deal where she would receive £15,000 in return for her TT.

An Audi spokesman told us although the car is now fixed, it's still willing to accept the rejection case, saying: "The team at Salisbury Audi is now confident the TT is in sound order. Following consultation from the Financial Ombudsman, Audi UK has concluded the offer is fair and reasonable as Salisbury Audi made every effort to minimise inconvenience."

Samantha told us: "I'm still left out of pocket, but at least I can move on."



Joe Finnerty

Ministers need to put UK's roads at the centre of their transport policy

AE CAST your mind back to the General Election in May, and you'll remember that motoring promises and policies were pretty thin on the ground from all parties.

Auto Express – along with many motorists – was left bemused that such a large slice of the electorate was seemingly being ignored.

Fast forward to now and it appears little has changed. We recently put several questions to roads minister Andrew Jones covering all aspects of motoring (Issue 1,398). We rounded off our Q&A by asking what he thought would be the biggest issue the Department for Transport will have to deal with in the next 10 years.

For motorists, his answer was underwhelming. Mr Jones focused on two rail projects: London's Crossrail for 2018 and HS2 to bridge the north and south. His second priority was the Airport Commission and where extra capacity can be found in the UK.

Finally, he moved on to motoring, where he said: "Improving our roads will of course also play a key role in transport policy over the next 10 years. In July, the Chancellor announced the creation of a National Roads Fund, and we are already thinking about how we turn this into the next chapter of our roads investment story."

The words "thinking about" and "key role" don't exactly fill me with confidence there's anything in the pipeline and I strongly suspect in 10 years' time we'll be facing the same problems on the road as we do now.

The continued general disinterest and lack of action from Government to face up to and tackle necessary changes to our roads head-on is both remarkable and worrying.

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"I suspect in 10 years' time we'll be facing the same problems on the roads as we do now"

Latest research has revealed motorists' concerns about costs of garage work



Drivers worry about hidden repair costs

■ One in 10 pays more for work on car than garage's initial quote

AE Martin Saarinen

ONE in 10 motorists ends up paying more for car repairs than initially quoted by the garage, a new study by the RAC has found.

Drivers were asked if they believed they were overcharged for repair, service or MoT work, and whether or not they were worried garages would charge them for extra work carried out.

Six in 10 motorists claim to worry about the hidden costs when booking in a car, and nearly a quarter admitted to being "very concerned" they'd face fees for extra work carried out. The figures reveal these worries are well founded as 12 per cent are charged more.

However, more than half said the fees at their local garage are fair in comparison to others. It's rare to end up paying less, though, as just three per cent said the final repair bill came under the quoted price.

Nearly all motorists agreed more transparency is needed, with nine out of 10 saying they would like to be able to look up what is included in the different types of service for their cars, and 10 per cent saying they do not trust nearby garages.

Pete Williams, from RAC Garage Compare, said: "Even though we now live in a society obsessed with comparing prices for almost everything we buy, this behaviour has not become common-place when booking a car in for an MoT, service or repair."



MOTERING LAWYER

Neil Davies
Senior Partner at
Caddick Davies
(www.motordefencelawyers.co.uk)

■ **SO you've been summonsed to appear at the magistrates' court for a speeding offence. For many drivers, it'll be a first time – and the big question is, what should you expect?**

Attending court is likely to be a daunting prospect for many people, but it needn't be if you have an understanding of what will happen.

When you arrive, you report to a court usher, who will tell you when you need to go into court. The usher will also show you where to stand.

Once in court you will be asked to confirm your name and address, and then to enter your plea. This is simply a case of saying 'Guilty' or 'Not Guilty', depending on whether or not you accept the offence.

If you plead 'Not Guilty', magistrates will adjourn your case to a later date for trial. If you plead 'Guilty', the case will continue there and then. You'll be given an opportunity to explain yourself and the reasons for the offence with a view to persuading the magistrates to be lenient with you. After that, the magistrates will proceed to sentence you.

For a speeding offence, the magistrates will impose a fine and either penalty points on your licence or a disqualification from driving.



Inbox What do you think?

Contact **Martin Saarinen**

mail@autoexpress.co.uk @AutoExpress

Write to: Watchdog/Letters, Auto Express, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD

HOT TOPIC New Toyota Prius

FROM: Albert YOU may love or hate the design of the new Prius, but I think everyone will agree that Toyota knows a thing or two about making class-leading hybrids. I'll certainly be visiting my local dealer to have a go in what appears to be a much improved model.

FROM: Pete Richardson AS a current Prius owner, I think Toyota is on to something. I've never had a car that's been so cheap to run and own. It's also relaxing to drive and the sound system is brilliant, too. I keep telling people to stop criticising the Prius until they've driven one.

MIXED RESPONSE

Wraps have come off new Prius, and readers aren't convinced by its design



Join the debate at www.autoexpress.co.uk

■ "Is the design supposed to help the Prius achieve better fuel economy? If so, why is the same style not used in more cars?" **Ben**

■ "£27k for the top-of-the-range model? No thanks. I'd go for the Mitsubishi Outlander PHEV instead." **Michael Simpkins**

■ "Toyota could sell a lot more of these if they had styled it to look better. I for one am put off by the design." **soldierboy001**

It's time to ban all uninsured drivers

FROM: Derek Smith FOLLOWING on from John Jones' comments (Issue 1,395) about uninsured drivers, I agree that the penalties are too lenient. A driving ban and a hefty fine will help eliminate this law breaking. Why should insurance payers have to cover this illegal act?

Dipped headlamps are better than DRLs

FROM: Ian Carne DAYLIGHT running lights are a good idea, but no substitute for dipped headlamps. The main problem is they only work on the front, leaving the rear of the vehicle vulnerable in poor visibility. Also, some are so bright at night that they are quite dangerous.

SEAT needs to build the Leon Cross Sport

FROM: Andrew Pain I WOULD love to see SEAT build the Leon Cross Sport (Issue 1,396). I've had my Leon ST for 18 months and I love it. However, climbing out of the low sports seats is proving troublesome for my old knees. The Cross Sport would be the best of both worlds. I really hope it makes it to production.

EcoSport just looks like a Fiesta estate

FROM: Davy K Watters THE only revision I can see in the new Ford EcoSport (Issue 1,398) is that the spare wheel is off the back door. Nothing in the modern range excites me. I'm a Ford fan, but this is just another Fiesta estate. I grew up with a Mk5 Escort and the only decent one was the last facelift, yet it was a long time coming.

Useful Contacts

THE following provide help with motoring problems. Some services are free, others charge a fee or operate on premium-rate lines (p), while some offer advice for members only (m).

Legal
AA: 0906 010 1300 (p)
RAC: 0870 5533 533 (m)
Which?: 01992 822 800
Consumer Direct: 0845 404 0506
Local Trading Standards
Local Citizens Advice Bureau

Used car inspections
AA: 0800 085 3007
RAC: 0800 085 2529
Technical advice
AA: 0870 606 1619 (m)
Driving licences
DVLA: 0300 790 6801

Car registration/history
HPI: 01722 422422
AA: 0800 316 3564
DVLA: 0300 790 6802
RAC: 0800 975 5867
Traffic information
AA: 09003 401100 (p)
RAC: 09003 444999 (p)

Problems with dealers
Motor Codes: 0800 692 0825
Consumer Ombudsman: www.consumer-ombudsman.org
RMIF: 0845 839 9205 (m)
Scottish Motor Trade Association: 0131 331 5510

Problems with makers
Motor Codes: 0800 692 0825
Financial problems
Financial Ombudsman: 0800 023 4567
Safety concerns/recalls
DVSA: 0300 123 9000



50 YEARS OF *BOBBY DAZZLER*

We drive Volvo's very first British police car – alongside its latest – as the brand marks half a century of fighting crime with UK forces



Chris Rosamond

THE traditional chrome police bell tucked behind the grille of this Volvo 121 Amazon sounds to modern ears like something from an old black and white 'cop caper'. Back in the sixties, its insistent jingle would've sent a shiver down the spine of speeding motorists in Hampshire – but it was also ringing the changes for a bold new era of policing on Britain's roads.

Until the first of Hampshire Constabulary's new Volvo Amazons hit the road – 50 years ago, in 1965 – UK police forces had always run British-manufactured cars. It was an age when the motorway network was in its infancy, and forces around the country were patrolling at the wheel of everything from Austins to Wolseleys – with Daimlers, Jaguars, MGs, Rileys and Rovers among others in between.

With so many homegrown marques to choose from, Hampshire Constabulary displayed a maverick streak when replacing its ageing and ponderous Austin Westminsters and Riley 6/110s. Partly motivated by frustration at its

British cars' poor reliability, for six months it evaluated a Citroen DS and the Volvo against the British Humber Super Snipe estate. The Amazon proved the fastest, most agile and most reliable choice, so the force ordered four in 1965.

These Volvos are believed to have been Britain's first-ever 'foreign' traffic police cars, their deployment being all the more obvious as they were also among the very first UK police cars to be painted white instead of traditional black. The Amazons' high-profile arrival was duly accompanied by a storm of nationalistic outrage, and the shocking matter of foreign cop cars on British roads was even raised in Parliament. But the vehicles proved their worth, and police Volvos have been on duty for half a century since.

The car pictured here – registration number FOR 298D – was the second Amazon to enter service. It's back in the possession of the Hampshire force after officer Steve Woodward discovered it rotting in a Welsh barn. Following restoration, it now appears at police functions and family days, and is the earliest-surviving foreign police car in the





Old and new: There's 50 years between them, but Amazon and V60 still focus on keeping officers safe and comfortable while reaching an incident fast, fully laden



Olis Clay

KITTED OUT

Weight of equipment traffic cops required meant the Amazon's engine was upgraded with Ruddspeed twin-carb kits to provide extra muscle

"After 550,000 miles, well worn seats are still comfortable, while large wheel makes Volvo feel agile"

UK. John Bradley ran Hampshire's police fleet for 20 years, and worked for the force for 45 years until retirement in 2006 – a notable career that was rewarded with an MBE from the Queen. He remembers the Amazons well, having driven them 'in period' at the start of his service.

"The officers loved them," he says. "The cars they'd had before were all older tech, and this was something that looked and felt completely different. The Volvo had a great gearbox, lots of power and torque, and officers would always try to grab the keys before anyone else."

Even today, a quick spin behind the wheel reveals those aren't the Amazon's only qualities. After an estimated 550,000 miles, the well worn seats are still comfortable, while the large-rimmed wheel and tight turning circle make the car feel agile and easy to manoeuvre even without power-steering. Performance is lively, too, as shortly after the cars entered service tuning firm Ruddspeed provided twin-carb upgrade kits that boosted the four-cylinder engine's power to 118bhp. This was considered essential, due to the weight of police kit the Amazons were being asked to carry.

"Driver feedback was excellent," says John, who oversaw the force's purchase of subsequent generations



UPGRADED Electronics platform has been upgraded to cope with the additional police lights and communication systems

RAPID RESPONSE

Dash looks normal, but V60 has Polestar-tuned 230bhp D5 diesel, handles securely and is refined at speed

of Volvo police cars. "Build quality was superb compared with British models of the time, they were known for safety and handling, and the reliability was really good."

Hampshire Constabulary went on to use 144 and then 244 saloons (the iconic Volvo 'brick') as Area Cars, right up to the early nineties – although for high-speed motorway work the force was running Jaguar XJ6 saloons in the eighties, followed by a short spell with the BMW 5 Series.

It was in the early nineties that the Volvo motorway patrol car started to attain near-cult status across the UK, with Hampshire and many other forces choosing the fabled 850 estate – especially the turbocharged T5 versions that were good for nearly 150mph. The V70 has remained a firm police favourite, and British cars have all but disappeared in police colours. Instead, other continental marques such as Audi, BMW and Mercedes have followed Volvo into the gap left by the disappearance of once-familiar Rover V8s and V6-powered Ford Scorpios and Vauxhall Omegas.

Modern Jaguars are generally considered too expensive and too short of boot space for police work, while the once-ubiquitous Range Rover has been usurped by the BMW X5.

Recent years have, however, seen a significant decline in the numbers of liveried motorway patrols. Official figures show uniformed traffic officer numbers declining from 7,000 in the early noughties to 4,300 today. Forces instead seem to rely on cameras to catch law-breakers, while uniformed Highways Agency staff help keep the traffic flowing.

Volvo and others still supply vehicles for traffic police roles, of course, but the emphasis has switched towards



PIONEERS OF THE BREATH TEST KIT

FIGHTING the scourge of drinking and driving has not always been at the forefront of roads policing, but it's definitely been one of the key roles for the past 50 years since Volvo's Amazon was called up for duty.

This Christmas, as the police once again ramp up breathalyser tests for the festive season, we're on the cusp of another motoring milestone. January 2016 will mark the 50th anniversary of the introduction of the Road Safety Bill, which set the current blood-alcohol limit for drivers at 80mg per 100ml. Prior to that, there had been no legal limit at which prosecutions became automatic.

A year after the bill's introduction, police cars began to be equipped with new breathalyser technology, which allowed motorists to be tested at the side of the road. Hampshire's early Volvos would have been some of the first to see this vital new policing technology rolled out.

"Hampshire's early Volvos would've been some of the first to carry breathalyser tech"



"Latest police-spec V60 includes uprated 17-inch rims, boosted anti-roll bars and self-levelling suspension"

unmarked cars and an ever-increasing demand for armed response units. "There's been a big change in the types of role police use our cars for," says Volvo's Special Vehicles manager, Ian Reger. "It's a move away from the motorway-type model where Volvo used to dominate, and we've seen a massive increase in armed-response vehicles instead."

He continues: "While you could use pretty much any car for basic patrol work, in our sector they have to meet tough operational requirements first and foremost. There aren't many vehicles that can take a ton of equipment and ammunition, plus five police officers, and then be driven at more than 100mph to respond to an emergency."

To help make the point, Volvo Special Vehicles loaned Auto Express its latest V60 police car demonstrator, which features a 230bhp D5 diesel not currently available in the 'civilian' V60 range. We didn't drive it fully laden, but with engine mods from Volvo's performance arm Polestar and a smooth-shifting eight-speed automatic, it pulls like a train with seemingly effortless torque. It handles securely, and is comfortable and relaxed at speed, too.

Latest 'police spec' includes reinforced 17-inch alloys, boosted anti-roll bars and self-levelling suspension, plus an uprated electronics platform that'll cope with the additional police lights and communication systems.

Ultimately, though, it's still all about keeping officers safe and comfortable in a vehicle that can get to an incident reliably and in the shortest-possible time, while laden to the hilt with ever-increasing amounts of kit.

The technology has advanced in leaps and bounds, and the roles may have evolved, but 50 years on the Amazon's underlying strengths are still the ones that count.



Nicknamed 'the brick', 244 was used until early nineties



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Clubsport comes with a touchscreen nav as standard, unlike Golf R



INTERIOR
GTI's plush cabin is enhanced with body-hugging bucket seats, Honeycomb 40 inserts, Alcantara steering wheel and gearknob, as well as exclusive mats and sill plates

Essentials

Volkswagen Golf GTI Clubsport

Price:	£29,000 (est)
Engine:	2.0-litre 4cyl turbo petrol
Power/torque:	286bhp/380Nm
Transmission:	Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive
0-62mph:	5.9 seconds
Top speed:	155mph
Economy:	41mpg (est)
CO₂:	162g/km

ON SALE February 2016



ENGINE Power's been boosted to 286bhp – up there with the likes of the Civic Type R. Suspension has been tweaked to match



EQUIPMENT Alloys are new, while aerodynamic upgrades include a front air curtain, tweaked splitter and large rear wing, all providing greater downforce



Volksw

FIRST DRIVE We try



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AE THE Volkswagen Golf GTI was the original hot hatchback. Conceived in the seventies as a secret after-hours experiment, it wasn't expected to exceed a production run of 5,000 units. However, 40 years later the car is in its seventh generation, and more than two million have found homes across the globe.

To celebrate this significant anniversary, VW has tweaked the formula by adding more power, better aerodynamics and semi-slick tyres to the Mk7 GTI. The result is this: the Clubsport.

Previously available with 217bhp (standard) or 227bhp (with the factory-fit Performance Pack), the Golf GTI has long been one of our favourite hot hatches. The Clubsport ups the ante, though, boosting maximum power to a not-insignificant 286bhp. That pushes it into the Honda Civic Type R ballpark, and – interestingly – VW Golf R territory.

But Volkswagen bosses insist this modified GTI is a different beast. The

driver's choice if you will. In fact, the instructors at the Portimao launch event told us this car is three to four seconds faster per lap than a Golf R around the 2.9-mile Portuguese race track.

How has this been achieved? Well, in addition to the power boost, the GTI Clubsport gets a host of aerodynamic upgrades. There's a new front air curtain to optimise airflow through the bumper and past the alloy wheels, as well as a tweaked splitter and sizeable rear wing to provide greater downforce.

Engineers have been busy under the skin, too, spec'ing new spring rates, revised dampers and different bump stops. Oddly, though, while the rears have been stiffened, those at the front have been softened. Apparently it helps with agility.

And there's no denying this GTI is more agile. All the above changes – added to the XDS+ electronic differential from the Performance Pack car – make this a Golf like no other. It's quicker through corners than the standard model, and considerably faster even than the pricier



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Turbo petrol compact exec is only alternative to hybrid. Is it a winner?

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Behind the wheel as potent 1.4-litre petrol boosts crossover range.

34 FIESTA MOUNTUNE
Tuner works magic on Ford's brilliant 1.0-litre EcoBoost supermini.

36 PASSAT ALLTRACK
First UK drive of chunky, jacked-up new 4WD Volkswagen estate.



Volkswagen Golf GTI Clubsport

286bhp newcomer that celebrates 40 years of hot hatch legend in style

Performance
0-62mph/top speed
5.9 seconds/155mph



Running costs
41mpg (est)
£55 fill-up



Thanks to its compliant ride and punchy engine, the GTI Clubsport is easy to drive



R version. In day-to-day use, the car generates 261bhp. However, that can be boosted by 25bhp in 10-second bursts by simply flooring the throttle. This is impossible to detect in normal driving, yet makes the GTI feel nearly as fast in a straight line as the 296bhp Golf R. This is helped by the Clubsport's 380Nm torque figure (matching the R's) being made available from a mere 1,700rpm.

Plus, while the Clubsport DSG is a full second slower from 0-62mph than the auto Golf R, taking 5.9 seconds, the manual car completes the sprint in the same time. The manual Golf R does it in 5.3 seconds.

We drove the car only on the bone-dry Portimao circuit, and while we've no doubt the four-wheel-drive Golf R would come into its own in the wet, traction was impressive – especially on the optional Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres. With the traction control off, the Clubsport is slingshotted out of tight bends, with bags of grip and nicely weighted steering.

It's not as sharp as a Renaultsport Mégane, but that's never been what the Golf is about. In fact, it's only a shame the

pre-production models we tried were restricted to the track. As with the Skoda Octavia vRS 230 we drove earlier this year, we expect the Clubsport to be a far more flattering road car thanks to the compliant ride and punchy engine. The fact you can leave it in third gear and let it pull you out of corners makes it very easy to drive fast.

But regardless of engine and chassis, this GTI Clubsport should be as easy to live with every day as any fast Golf before it. Yes, it's slightly stiffer, but all Clubsports get the same plush interior as the normal GTI – albeit with unique (but comfortable) body-hugging bucket seats. There are also Honeycomb 40 design dash and door inserts in tribute to this special car's anniversary, as well as an Alcantara-trimmed steering wheel and gearknob. Exclusive floor mats and sill plates complete the look.

Standard kit – as with all GTIs – is comprehensive, with xenons, climate control and nav all included. The Clubsport adds smoked rear lights, parking sensors and tinted glass. You'll want to pay extra for the adaptive dampers, though, as is true on all hot Golfs from GTI to the R range-topper.



Auto Express Verdict

THE Volkswagen Golf Clubsport nestles itself neatly between the standard GTI and the four-wheel-drive R version. It gets nearly as much power as the latter, too, and in reality can out-manoeuvre its stablemate on a smooth, dry race track – as we discovered during our test drive. The subtle tweaks to the engine, suspension and aerodynamics make this one of the finest-handling Golfs ever manufactured, although in wet Britain we'd predict the R still holds on to its crown as the ultimate Golf – just. Happy anniversary to a perennial favourite.





James Disdale

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AE WE'VE already been impressed by the Jaguar XF with the flagship 3.0-litre V6, but the entry-level 2.0-litre model is going to be the big seller. Promising low emissions and strong performance, this car has cost-conscious business users firmly in its sights.

It uses the Ingenium four-cylinder diesel first seen in the smaller XE, and is available with the same choice of 161bhp or 178bhp power outputs. Here we try the more potent version in racy R-Sport guise.

Prod the starter button and the 2.0-litre rumbles into life before settling down to a slightly clattery idle. It's not intrusive, and no worse than four-cylinder rivals from BMW and Audi, although it can't match the V6 engine for refinement.

Twist the rotary gear selector into drive, squeeze the throttle and the Jag accelerates smoothly and briskly. Engine noise is quite subdued, while the muscular 430Nm torque output means the XF feels faster than its 2.0-litre capacity would suggest. It sounds a little strained when extended, but with so much mid-range muscle you rarely need to rev the engine hard to travel quickly.

Seamless

This feeling of effortless acceleration is enhanced by the eight-speed automatic box (there's also a six-speed manual that'll save you £1,750). In auto mode it delivers slick shifts and responds promptly to the throttle. Squeeze the pedal a bit harder and it holds on to a gear for stronger acceleration; give it a little lift and the transmission changes up seamlessly. You can also take manual control using the steering wheel-mounted paddles.

Like other XFs, the 2.0d's steering is quick and precise, boosting the feeling of agility as you turn into a bend. More powerful R-Sport models like our test car get slightly stiffer suspension that's designed to reduce roll and improve body control. Yet despite a slightly firmer low-speed ride, the car feels almost exactly the same to drive as less sporty versions. That means you get strong grip and excellent composure – for such a big saloon, through a series of corners the XF feels remarkably nimble. It's refined, too.

Wind and road noise are well suppressed, while on the motorway the 2.0-litre diesel is barely audible. And once you've got past the suspension's low-speed fidget, the Jag glides quietly over most bumps and potholes.

Elsewhere, the 2.0d is virtually identical to the more expensive V6 diesel. On R-Sport models, that means you get the same deeper bumpers, subtle side skirts, tailgate spoiler and 18-inch alloys – the 161bhp version comes with smaller 17-inch rims.

It's a similar story inside, where the car has the same mix of soft leather for the seats and aluminium-effect trim inserts. Some of the materials feel a little cheap compared to those inside a BMW 5 Series, but the Jag is solidly built and has a classy

look and feel. Also familiar is the cabin's cosy and cossetting air, created by the small side windows and wide centre console. Yet there's a surprising amount of space, with plenty of rear head and legroom.

Where the 2.0-litre car differs from its six-cylinder brother is in its low running costs. Go for the 161bhp version with a manual box, and you'll benefit from CO₂ emissions of just 104g/km and a claimed 70.6mpg. The more powerful 178bhp model tested here emits 114g/km and returns 65.7mpg – virtually identical to a 520d's figures, but slightly higher than an A6 2.0 TDI Ultra's.

Yet factor in the Jag's extensive kit list – sat-nav, keyless entry and heated seats are all standard – and for many company users the XF will be a more tempting proposition.

Jaguar XF 2.0d

FIRST UK DRIVE Mk2 exec has impressed in V6 diesel spec



"For such a big saloon, through a series of corners the XF feels remarkably nimble. It's refined, too"

Essentials

Jaguar XF 2.0d R-Sport

Price: £36,850

Engine: 2.0-litre 4cyl diesel

Power/torque: 178bhp/430Nm

Transmission: Eight-speed automatic, rear-wheel drive

0-62mph: 8.1 seconds

Top speed: 142mph

Economy: 65.7mpg

CO₂: 114g/km

ON SALE Now



Soft leather trims the supportive sports seats in our R-Sport; sill plates also get unique trims



PRACTICALITY There's 540 litres of space in the Jaguar's boot – more than in an Audi A6 – plus by tugging on levers in the load bay you can fold the 60:40-split rear seats to give a maximum capacity of 963 litres



AUTO BOX Eight-speed automatic is still operated by beautiful dial that rises up out of centre console panel when you start the engine, giving a real sense of occasion. R-Sport is set apart by alloy-trimmed pedals



Auto Express Verdict

WITH its blend of style, space and low running costs, the XF 2.0d is an executive car that appeals to the head and the heart. The new four-cylinder diesel engine serves up decent refinement, plus it's a surprisingly strong performer and impressively efficient. R-Sport trim also gives an extra dose of head-turning kerb appeal, and in combination with the Ingenium diesel and automatic gearbox, it's the pick of the XF line-up.



ec. Is four-cylinder as good?



Wide centre console gives cabin a luxurious feel, as do the high-quality materials. And rear seats provide more legroom than previous XF's, thanks to the longer wheelbase

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Lexus IS 200t

Running costs
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Essentials

Lexus IS 200t F Sport

Price:	£31,495
Engine:	2.0-litre 4cyl turbo petrol
Power/torque:	242bhp/350Nm
Transmission:	Eight-speed auto, rear-wheel drive
0-62mph:	7.0 seconds
Top speed:	143mph
Economy:	39.2mpg
CO₂:	167g/km

ON SALE Now

FIRST UK DRIVE Turbo petrol version of compact exec fails to convince

Nathan Morgan



EQUIPMENT The F Sport comes adorned with racy add-ons, including large 18-inch alloy wheels, beefed-up bumpers and F Sport badges.



PRACTICALITY Leather's fitted as standard and there's plenty of rear space. Boot matches rivals (480 litres), and betters hybrid due to lack of batteries



BADGING 200t denotes petrol power and sits alongside petrol hybrid. If you want a diesel model, you'll have to look to rivals like BMW and Audi

Verdict

THE diesel-engined Lexus is long gone. As a result, if you don't fancy the IS 300h hybrid, this 2.0-litre petrol model is your only choice. But variety isn't always the spice of life. We prefer the 300h's hushed drivetrain and more relaxed nature – despite the flawed CVT automatic gearbox. A BMW 3 Series remains more fun to drive, while the new Audi A4 is considerably more economical.



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AE LEXUS committed itself to a hybrid future a long time ago, disregarding Europe's demand for diesels. The brand has enjoyed a fair amount of success in Asia and the US, and hopes it can convince UK drivers that electrification is the key to driving satisfaction.

However, in an attempt to offer buyers a bit more variety, Lexus is now selling a pure petrol version badged IS 200t. It costs £1,000 less than the equivalent hybrid, uses a 242bhp 2.0-litre turbocharged engine, and comes paired with a conventional eight-speed automatic transmission. That should hush critics of its usual CVT box.

On the road, though, the reality doesn't match the promise. The gearbox feels lethargic and rather sluggish next to BMW's brilliant ZF and Audi's dual-clutch S tronic. The 200t has more power than both the BMW 320i and Audi A4 2.0 TFSI 190, yet feels far less urgent in normal driving.

It constantly struggles to find the desired gear and can leave you stranded at roundabouts and junctions, while it desperately tries to drop a couple of cogs. At least the CVT set-up in the IS 300h does what it says on the tin, continually varying its ratios to provide a more instantaneous throttle response.

It's not as satisfying to drive as a 3 Series, either. Our F Sport test car came with big 18-inch alloy wheels and stiffened suspension, detracting somewhat from the relaxed and cossetting nature of other Lexus models. That said, there's loads of grip from the wide rear tyres, and body



There's a choice of driving modes, and roll is kept to a minimum

roll is kept in check. The steering is well weighted, too. Unfortunately, the IS 200t can't compete on running costs, either. It not only loses out to its similarly priced hybrid sibling, it's thirstier than its closest rivals.

The IS 300h emits just 107g/km of CO₂ in F Sport trim, while the turbo petrol in this car emits a frankly disappointing 167g/km. That means annual vehicle excise duty of £205 – and crucially – a quite significant company car tax bill. A BMW 320i M Sport emits 134g/km, while a new Audi A4 slashes this to 119g/km, even on the bigger S line alloy wheels.

The interior is beautifully crafted, though, and F Sport cars are comparable in price with similarly specced competitors.

"The gearbox feels lethargic and sluggish next to BMW's brilliant ZF and Audi's dual-clutch S tronic"



Vitara S performs better than ever, and efficiency is boosted as well

Essentials

Suzuki Vitara S

Price:	£21,000 (est)
Engine:	1.6-litre 4cyl turbo petrol
Power/torque:	138bhp/220Nm
Transmission:	Six-speed manual, four-wheel drive
0-62mph:	10.2 seconds
Top speed:	124mph
Economy:	52.3mpg
CO ₂ :	127g/km

ON SALE Now



Suzuki Vitara S

Running costs

52.3mpg (official)
£51 fill-up



FIRST DRIVE Crossover boosted by potent new 1.4-litre turbo model



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AE THE Suzuki Vitara is a very easy car to like. It's handsome, built to last and represents rather good value for money. If there's one criticism, though, it's a lack of variety under the bonnet, with only a mediocre petrol and a gruff diesel to choose from. Now, however, there's the Vitara S, powered by an all-new 138bhp 1.4-litre petrol turbo. We've driven it for the first time.

The 1.4 turbo may be the smallest engine available in the Vitara – both the diesel and other petrol have 1.6-litre capacities – but it's the most powerful and provides an injection of performance that's been missing. It comes paired with Suzuki's ALLGRIP all-wheel drive as standard and a six-speed manual gearbox, yet will still return more than 52mpg with CO₂ emissions of 127g/km – trouncing the naturally aspirated 1.6.

Whereas the current naturally aspirated petrol engine needs revs to eke out the power, the downsized 1.4 turbo picks up far quicker lower in the rev range, meaning more accessible performance. That extra pace is immediately noticeable, especially crawling out of slow corners and up inclines.

It also means far greater overtaking ability, with more in-gear shove thanks to the additional 64Nm of torque totalling 220Nm. In the 1.6 petrol you really have to time your manoeuvres, picking the right gear and being wary of distances, as the engine simply doesn't respond as quickly as you think it will. Those

Suzuki's smart styling hides 375-litre luggage area that expands to 710 litres



Generous standard kit includes sat-nav, Bluetooth, adaptive cruise, air-con and DAB radio



issues have been resolved in the Vitara S, which also makes it more relaxing to drive. Ease off on the motorway and the engine is hushed, while the ride is just as compliant as it was before, shrugging off the worst of the road imperfections.

The 1.4 turbo is available only in the Vitara S. Suzuki has no plans to make it an option in lower-spec models, which is a shame as it's definitely the best engine in the range. You'll have to fork out around £21,000 to get your hands on it, although official pricing has yet to be confirmed.

While that sounds expensive, you get plenty of kit. There's sat-nav, Bluetooth, a reversing camera, adaptive cruise control, air-con, DAB radio and LED headlamps. From the outside, you'll be able to tell it apart from lesser Vitaras by the 17-inch black alloy rims, unique front grille and wheelarch extensions.

PRACTICALITY Vitara is a bit taller and longer than its Nissan Juke rival. There's decent rear space, and three adults should be able to fit comfortably across the seat. All get headrests



EQUIPMENT Sporty red accents feature on the air vents, plus there's red stitching on the steering wheel, all of which hints at the power of the new 1.4-litre turbo engine under the bonnet



STYLING Racy spoiler is fitted to all Vitaras, not just S, but this model also gets a unique front grille, wheelarch extensions and 17-inch black alloys

Verdict

THE new turbocharged 1.4-litre really does address one of the biggest traditional criticisms of the Vitara. The SUV now has the necessary turn of pace to keep it from dawdling behind – and as a bonus, it uses less fuel in the process. It's a shame this engine is restricted to the range-topping S model, but then again you do get a very likeable and reasonably roomy car equipped with plenty of kit.



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Otis Clay

Ford Fiesta 1.0 Mountune

Performance
0-60mph/top speed
7.2 seconds/125mph (est)



FIRST DRIVE Tuning expert works its magic on three-cylinder EcoBoost engine



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AE SPECIALIST tuner Mountune has been fettling fast Fords for years. Fiesta and Focus owners wanting more from their hatchbacks have long been able to upgrade their cars with performance-enhancing aftermarket add-ons.

The latest tweaks, available in the MR165 kit, benefit owners of the Fiesta EcoBoost, and can be fitted to 123bhp or 138bhp cars for £1,399. Changes include a high-flow induction kit, larger-capacity intercooler and a selection of higher-quality pipes and hoses. The result is 163bhp and 245Nm from the tiny 1.0-litre three-cylinder.

It certainly feels quicker than both the standard-output cars on the road. Put your foot down in third gear and the turbo picks up pace at a surprising lick. You still get that characteristic three-pot thrum, but it feels far less pressured than the standard EcoBoost.

It's still a light car, too, and from a standstill feels suitably sprightly. In a straight-line drag it'll out-sprint a VW Polo Blue GT, and comes close to the more powerful GTI. The Fiesta takes 7.2 seconds to do 0-60mph – that's 1.3 faster than the 138bhp model and a full 2.2 faster than the 123bhp car.

But it's not all brawn and no brain – Mountune has history and knows what it's doing. The Fiesta was always a good base for a sporty hatch, but the firm's engineers

have made this car even more playful. It's great fun to drive, and sets a new benchmark in its class.

Not only is it much quicker than the standard car, but you can throw it around corners with confidence. Grip is good, yet lift off the accelerator mid-corner and you can flick the back end out before the traction control catches you and puts you back on the straight and narrow. However, the 2013 Zetec S-based car we tried had no means of switching this off, resulting in frustrating power cuts on the exit of greasy corners.

In terms of styling, the package's only changes are subtle bootlid badges. Our car came with extra boy-racer graphics down the side, but these are options. Inside, it's standard Fiesta – both front and back.

Mountune couldn't confirm whether the mechanical changes made any difference to economy or emissions, but tweaked cars are likely to cost slightly more to run. There'll inevitably be a slight drop on the 138bhp car's 62.8mpg – but if you drive this Fiesta as it's intended, it'll fall short of that anyway.

As it's based on the standard model, both new and existing cars can be upgraded. The set-up can be installed either at Mountune's HQ in Essex, or at one of the UK's 13 other approved Mountune PRO Ford dealers. Fitting takes two hours, and doesn't invalidate your manufacturer warranty. In fact, all the additional parts are covered for 12 months or 12,000 miles.



Mountune model is based on regular Fiesta, so has normal car's kit. Graphics are optional



Essentials**Ford Fiesta
1.0 Mountune**

Price:	£15,945 (plus £1,399 kit)
Engine:	1.0-litre 3cyl turbo
Power/torque:	163bhp/245Nm
Transmission:	Five-speed manual, front-wheel drive
0-60/top spd:	7.2 secs/125mph (est)
Economy:	62.8mpg (est)
CO₂:	99g/km (est)

ON SALE Now

EQUIPMENT MR165 upgrade includes an induction kit and intercooler, as well as upgraded pipes and hoses. Upgraded power helps make the most of the standard five-speed transmission



PRACTICALITY As this is a mechanical upgrade, the newcomer remains as practical as the standard Fiesta. Space in the back is fine, and there's a 290-litre luggage area

**Auto Express Verdict**

MOUNTUNE'S MR165 kit makes the Fiesta EcoBoost more eager, but at £1,399 it pushes the price of the existing 123bhp Titanium-spec car dangerously close to that of a basic Fiesta ST. Still, if you already own a 1.0-litre Fiesta and want more power without sacrificing that all-important manufacturer warranty, then Mountune is the way to go. The MR165 kit makes a good car even better.

**SEAT Ibiza ST**

FIRST DRIVE Revamp for supermini extends to estate model. Is it a success?

**INTERIOR**

Upgraded cabin includes new central dash design that incorporates optional touchscreen media and nav

**Lawrence Allan**

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AE SUPERMINI estates still haven't caught on in the UK. Renault's Clio estate is sold only on the Continent, and Peugeot's 207 SW is long gone. The only options are Skoda's Fabia Estate and sister brand SEAT's Ibiza ST. And the latter's just been updated as part of a revamp for the whole Ibiza range.

As with the hatch (driven in Issue 1,398), the ST's exterior changes are subtle in the extreme. LED daytime running lamps, extra colours and new wheels feature, all of which enhance the five-year-old ST's existing good looks. There's no question that the new-for-2015 Fabia Estate is fresher, however.

Inside is where the biggest changes lie, with a new central dash that (for £500 more) incorporates a 6.5-inch touchscreen media and nav system. You also get Full Link, which incorporates Apple CarPlay, Android Auto and MirrorLink smartphone connectivity.

The facelift brings improved quality, with more soft-touch materials and fewer scratchy plastics. The old Ibiza always felt like a poor relation to its VW Group cousins in terms of cabin execution, but it now fits in well – even if it's too little, too late.

An ST trump card should be the extra practicality it

offers. Yet the wheelbase is the same as the regular Ibiza's – a model that's never been especially spacious – meaning rear knee room is still tight for adults. And while the 430-litre boot is well shaped and bigger than that of the hatch, it still lags behind the Fabia's 530-litre capacity.

The biggest benefit of the chunkier rear end, however, is the improved ride. That extra weight over the back axle meant our FR-spec test car felt more settled over bumps than the firmer hatch, although it's better still with the SE model's smaller wheels. The handling doesn't suffer unduly, either, but it still remains composed rather than fun.

The FR estate's main problem is that it isn't available with the brilliant new 1.0-litre EcoTSI petrol engine. We tried the range-topping 1.4 TDI diesel, which remains efficient and punchy, and also seems more refined than before. But at more than £18,000 the newcomer doesn't look great value, particularly when a 1.2 TSI petrol Connect is just over £15,000.

**Essentials****SEAT Ibiza
ST 1.4 TDI FR**

Price:	£18,050
Engine:	1.4-litre 3cyl diesel
Power:	104bhp
Transmission:	Five-speed manual, front-wheel drive
0-62/top spd:	10.3 secs/119mph
Economy:	76mpg
CO₂:	97g/km

ON SALE Now

PRACTICALITY A 430-litre load space is 137 litres bigger than that of the hatchback, but significantly smaller than a Skoda Fabia Estate's



EQUIPMENT FR spec brings a honeycomb grille, 16-inch alloy wheels and sporty styling upgrades, but Connect version is better value

Auto Express Verdict

THE Ibiza ST remains a good-looking and pleasant-driving car, while the upgrades to the interior are most welcome. But with models such as the excellent Skoda Fabia Estate around for the same money, it just isn't as practical as it should be. It also better suits a lower-spec petrol version than this pricey diesel.





Extra security of 4WD system is welcome on slippery surfaces

Essentials

Volkswagen Passat Alltrack 4Motion DSG

Price:	£33,935
Engine:	2.0-litre 4cyl diesel
Power/torque:	187bhp/400Nm
Transmission:	Six-speed auto, four-wheel drive
0-62mph:	8.0 seconds
Top speed:	137mph
Economy:	54.3mpg
CO ₂ :	137g/km

ON SALE Now



Volkswagen Passat Alltrack

FIRST UK DRIVE Jacked-up 4WD estate is a rugged alternative to an SUV



Jonathan Burn
Jonathan_Burn@dennis.co.uk
@Jonathan_burn

AE WITH the unpredictable British winter well and truly here, there's no better time to invest in some four-wheel-drive capability. If full-fat SUVs are a bit too 'in your face' for you, and crossovers aren't quite up to the job, off-road estates such as the new Volkswagen Passat Alltrack could be just what you're looking for.

Think of this second-generation Alltrack as a Passat Estate with wellies on. Chunky bumpers give it greater protection in the rough, while the extra 27mm ride height and 4WD system will get you further through it.

The Alltrack comes from the same off-road academy as the Skoda Octavia Scout, SEAT Leon X-Perience (tested on Page 60) and even VW's smaller Golf Alltrack – but the Passat is a little roomier and far more costly, reflecting its position in the class above.

In top-spec versions with the six-speed DSG auto and higher-powered 187bhp 2.0-litre diesel, the car comes in at nearly £6,000 more than the Skoda and £4,000-plus more than the SEAT. You could say that's a lot to pay for an extra 50 litres of boot space, but



Cabin feels upmarket, with a neat centre console and large touchscreen

the Passat feels more upmarket, with a neater centre console, larger touchscreen and a fraction more rear passenger space.

If you want to save a few quid, there's also the option of a 148bhp 2.0-litre, which comes with a six-speed manual box for £3,080 less. If we're honest, that's all the power you'll need, so it's the one we'd go for.

Nevertheless, this 187bhp version comes with a few more trinkets to justify its inflated

price. There's a full-length panoramic roof, 18-inch wheels and the slick six-speed DSG. As well as the extra power, the range-topper gets 60Nm more torque, up to 400Nm. Not only does that shave 1.2 seconds off the 0-62mph time, at 8.0 seconds, but more relevantly in this class it also means towing capacity increases from 1,800kg to 2,200kg.

From there, the Alltrack feels – hardly surprisingly – like a marginally higher-riding Passat in which you get a slightly more commanding view of the road ahead. Another thing you'll notice is the more cushioned ride thanks to the added suspension travel, which helps to take the edge off large road imperfections.

The Alltrack responds just as keenly as a standard Passat estate, but with the added security of four-wheel drive and a softened ride making it even more pleasant from behind the wheel. At every opportunity the VW is driven though the front wheels to help conserve fuel. Only when it detects a loss in traction is power sent to the rear tyres to help keep you on the straight and narrow.



PRACTICALITY Latest Alltrack isn't short on space, with plenty of rear passenger room. Cushioned ride takes edge off large bumps in the road, too



PRACTICALITY Wide tailgate reveals 639-litre luggage area, meaning VW is as practical as it looks. Extra torque and power boost towing weight from 1,800kg to 2,200kg as well

Raised ride height and chunky bumpers set Alltrack apart from Passat Estate

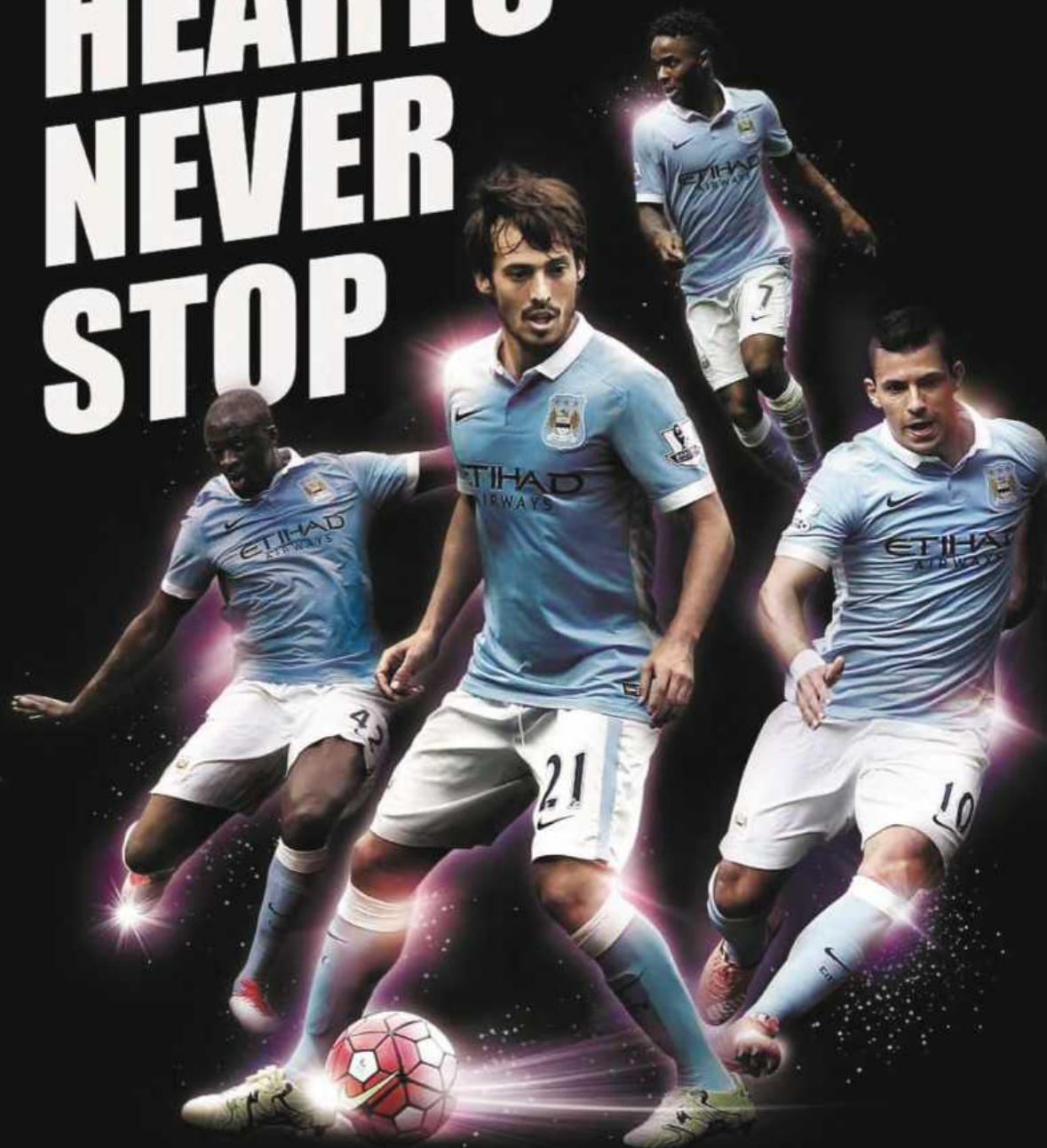


Verdict

IT'S pricey, but with the Alltrack you do get a lot of car and capability for your money. It's beautifully built and very pleasant to drive, while the on-demand four-wheel-drive system and off-road add-ons mean it'll fare just as well in a British winter as an SUV. We'd also recommend opting for the six-speed manual and lower-power 148bhp model, and pocketing the sizeable £3,080 difference.



HEARTS NEVER STOP



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Isuzu D-Max Fury

FIRST DRIVE Special edition pick-up spices up range



Sam Naylor

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AE THE Isuzu D-Max has been on sale for three years now, but it's been left in the shadows as a raft of new pick-ups – such as the Mitsubishi L200 and Nissan Navara – has hit showrooms. In a bid to bring the line-up back into contention, the brand has introduced a new Fury special edition.

With its Magma Red paint, black highlights and matching leather seats, the Fury looks hot, but most of the upgrades are cosmetic. The brand says this special is for younger customers who want the top-spec D-Max's pumped-up looks without the high price.

This D-Max is a decent pick-up. There's a huge 1,552mm x 1,530mm load bay, a 3,500kg towing capacity and a 1,072kg maximum payload – competitive numbers for those using the truck as a workhorse. It's good to drive, too, with well weighted steering and a strong 2.5-litre diesel.

All D-Max models get a five-year/125,000-mile warranty, which is excellent even in the pick-up market. There are plenty of options to choose from as well – buyers can add roll bars, spotlights, a tow bar and cargo rails.

The rear can seat three at a push, but the high floor means tall passengers might find themselves staring at their own knees. The optional red and black leather seats (a costly £1,325) on the Fury we tested looked good, and the driving position is comfortable – although the interior is far below those of the new Navara and L200.

What's telling is that some Land Rover dealers are starting to take up an Isuzu franchise now the Defender has been discontinued. As with that legendary 4x4, the D-Max has charm, but is also quite noisy and feels pretty old-fashioned. A perfect fit?



Isuzu D-Max Fury

Price:	£19,999
Engine:	2.5-litre 4cyl turbodiesel
Power/torque:	161bhp/400Nm
Transmission:	Six-speed manual, four-wheel drive
0-62mph:	N/A
Top speed:	112mph
Economy:	38.7mpg
CO₂:	192g/km

ON SALE Now

NEED TO KNOW

Isuzu sells the D-Max in single, extended and double-cab bodies, but the Fury special edition comes as a double-cab only



Verdict

THE D-Max Fury looks pretty good, with its red paintwork and black styling highlights. But it feels a little agricultural to drive when compared to its closest pick-up rivals, such as the new Mitsubishi L200 and Nissan Navara. Both of these competitors feel a lot more fun to drive on the road, and they are far more car-like as well. That said, if you avoid the expensive optional two-tone seats, the Isuzu still represents good value for money.



Coming soon



TOYOTA C-HR

JUNE 2016

BOLD C-HR will finally take Toyota into the compact crossover class. It'll get a hybrid powertrain and looks to beat Nissan's Juke.

SUPERMINIS

Ford Ka Plus	2017	Toyota FT-1 (Supra)	2017
Ford Fiesta	2017	VW Golf R400	2016
Kia Rio	2018	TVR sports car	2017
Nissan Micra	summer 2016	VW Golf GTI Mk8	summer 2019
Renault Twingo GT	2016	VW Scirocco GTS	2016

SUVs

Alfa Romeo SUV	2017
Aston Martin DBX	2017
Audi Q1	2016
Audi Q5	2016
Audi Q6	2018
Audi Q8	2020
Audi RS Q1	late 2016
Bentley 'Baby' Bentayga	late 2017
BMW 1 Series Sport Cross	2017
BMW X2	2017
BMW X3	2016
BMW X7	2018
Citroen Grand Cactus	2017
Dacia Duster facelift	2016
DS 3 SUV	2018
Ford Edge	spring 2016
Infiniti QX30	mid 2016
Jaguar F-Pace	2016
Jaguar 'Baby' F-Pace	2017
Kia Niro	2018
Lamborghini Urus	2018
Land Rover Defender	2018
Land Rover Discovery 5	late 2016
Lexus RX	early 2016
Maserati Levante	2016
Mercedes-AMG GT four-door	2017
Mercedes GLC Coupé	early 2016
Mercedes GLS	early 2016
MG GS	summer 2016
Mitsubishi ASX	spring 2017
Mitsubishi Shogun	2017
Nissan Juke	summer 2018
Peugeot 3008	2017
Porsche Cayenne Coupé	2017
Porsche Panamera	late 2016
Qoros 2 SUV	2016
Qoros 3 City SUV	2017
Renault Alaskan pick-up	2016
Renault seven-seat SUV	2017
Rolls-Royce Cullinan	2018
SEAT SUV	late 2016
Skoda seven-seat SUV	late 2016
Skoda Coupé SUV	2017
Skoda Yeti	2017
Suzuki Ignis	2017
Tesla Model X	spring 2016
Toyota C-HR	summer 2016
Volkswagen Tiguan	2016
Volkswagen Golf SUV	2017
Volvo XC40	2018
Volvo XC60	2017

FAMILY CARS

Alfa Romeo Giulia	autumn 2016
Alfa Romeo Giulia Estate	late 2016
Audi A3 three-cylinder	2016
BMW 3 Series Plug-in	early 2016
BMW i5	2016
Fiat Tipo	2016
Honda Civic	2017
Honda FCV	mid 2016
Infiniti Q60	late 2016
Kia Optima estate	2016
Kia Sportage	2016
Jaguar XE Sportbrake	2016
Mazda large SUV	2017
MG5	2020
MINI Countryman	2017
Nissan Leaf	mid 2016
Porsche Panamera	2016
Porsche Panamera estate	2017
Renault Mégane	mid 2016
Tesla Model III	late 2016
Toyota Prius	spring 2016
Vauxhall Insignia	2017
VW Beetle Dune	mid 2016
VW Golf CC	2016

SPORTS CARS

Abarth 124 Spider	2017
Abarth 500X	late 2016
Alfa 4C Stradale	2016
Alfa 6C	2016
Aston Martin DB11	late 2016
Aston Martin V8 Vantage	early 2016
Audi A5	spring 2016
Audi A9	2018
Audi RS4	late 2016
Audi S4	mid 2016
Audi TT RS	2016
Audi TT Sportback	2016
Audi TT Sport Quattro	2016
BMW i8 Plus	late 2016
BMW M1	2016
BMW M2	2016
BMW M4 GTS	2016
Bugatti Chiron	2017
Caterham sports car	2018
Ferrari 488 Spider	spring 2016
Ford GT	2016
Ford Focus RS	2016
Honda CR-Z	2017
Honda NSX	late 2016
Infiniti Q60	2016
Jaguar XE R	early 2016
Kia GT4 Stinger	2016
Lamborghini Asterion LP910-4	2017
Lamborghini Huracán Superleggera	2016
Lexus RC	early 2016
Lexus LF-1C	2016
Maserati Alfieri	2017
Maserati Gran Turismo	late 2017
McLaren 540 C	2016
Mercedes C 450 AMG Sport	2016
Mercedes-AMG C 63 Coupé	2016
MG TF replacement	2020
MINI Clubman JCW	2017
Nissan Pulsar Nismo	mid 2016
Peugeot 308 R Hybrid	2016
Peugeot 408 GT	2018
Porsche 961	2017
Porsche Mission E	spring 2017
Porsche Pajun	2018
Renault Alpine	late 2016

PEOPLE MOVERS

Renault Scenic	late 2016
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CABRIOLETS

Audi R8 Spyder	spring 2016
Abarth 124 Spider	2017
BMW M2 Convertible	2017
Fiat 124 Spider	summer 2016
Jaguar F-Type SVR	2016
Jaguar XE Convertible	2016
Lamborghini Huracán Spyder	2016
Mercedes C-Class Cabriolet	mid 2016
Mercedes S-Class Cabriolet	early 2016
MINI Convertible	2016
Range Rover Evoque Cabriolet	2016
Rolls-Royce Dawn	2016
VW Beetle Dune cabriolet	2016

LUXURY CARS

Audi A8	2017
BMW 5 Series	2016
Cadillac ELR	2016
Infiniti Q80	2017
Lexus GS	2016
Mercedes E-Class	2016
Rolls-Royce Phantom	2017
VW Phaeton	2017
Volvo S90	late 2016



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Scores on the *doors*

**New 'six-door' MINI Clubman
is more practical than ever –
so can it beat conventional
hatches from VW and Volvo?**

Pictures: Pete Gibson Location: Bentwaters Parks, Suffolk

AE IT'S fair to say that BMW-owned MINI has ignored the conventional class sectors when it's launched new models. The standard hatch has grown in size over the years, but the British brand has offered different bodystyles for buyers looking for yet more practicality.

Take the Clubman, for example. The original model added a longer tail, double rear doors and a second half door on one side, so it had some quirky charm to go with its extra versatility. Now, the second-generation version is based on the five-door hatch, and is technically a six-door

model. With such an unconventional layout, the Clubman maintains the tradition of fitting outside class boundaries, but that hasn't stopped us finding two rivals for its first test.

The VW Golf is pretty sensible in comparison, but it has similar boot space, while the 2.0 TDI diesel offers the same power as the Cooper D. Our second competitor is the Volvo V40. This is another hatch that is led by design, while again diesel power brings decent efficiency. Can the Clubman serve up a better mix of style, practicality and efficiency than either rival?



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**LIVING WITH AN...
AUDI RS3 SPORTBACK**

Four-wheel-drive mega hatch is ideal for mucky back roads in winter.



60

**LIVING WITH A...
SEAT LEON X-PERIENCE**

Rugged estate's Eco Tips feature makes us feel as if we're learning to drive.

**VW Golf 2.0 TDI Match Edition**

Price: £23,425

Engine: 2.0-litre 4cyl turbodiesel, 148bhp

0-60mph: 8.8 seconds

Test economy: 46.5mpg/10.2mpl

CO₂: 106g/km **Annual road tax:** £20

**Volvo V40 D3 SE**

Price: £23,770

Engine: 2.0-litre 4cyl turbodiesel, 148bhp

0-60mph: 9.4 seconds

Test economy: 47.7mpg/10.5mpl

CO₂: 99g/km **Annual road tax:** £0

**MINI Cooper D Clubman**

Price: £22,245

Engine: 2.0-litre 4cyl turbodiesel, 148bhp

0-60mph: 9.9 seconds

Test economy: 49.7mpg/10.9mpl

CO₂: 109g/km **Annual road tax:** £20

MODEL TESTED:

MINI Cooper D Clubman

PRICE: £22,245

ENGINE: 2.0-litre 4cyl, 148bhp

AE MINI revived its Clubman nameplate back in 2007, 38 years after the original model first took to the streets of Britain. However, unlike that car, it met with a mixed reception. This second-generation modern Clubman promises much more, though, with improved practicality and MINI's typical fun drive. Here we test the £22,245 Cooper D.

Styling 3.7/5

THERE'S no mistaking the Clubman for anything other than a MINI, thanks to the British brand's traditional styling cues. The designers have carried over the XL caricature styling details from the hatch, so the large, round headlamps and shapely grille give it a recognisable face – and with the bright LED running light rings, it's the same story in the dark.

Yet while the Clubman is based on a similar platform to the MINI five-door, here the extra metal means the design doesn't work quite so well. The long, sculpted sides and chunky wheelarches give it a purposeful look, but from some angles the big shoulder lines and narrow glass area can make the car appear a little dumpy.

Neat details such as the rear lights mounted on the tailgate, smart chrome trim and chunky door handles show MINI still knows how to design an appealing car, though, as well as a practical one.

The previous-generation Clubman featured a single rear-hinged door on the driver's side; as the car wasn't re-engineered for right-hand-drive markets, this meant back seat passengers stepped out into the traffic. In contrast, this latest Clubman gets two full rear doors, improving access, while other convenience features include a flashing alarm LED on the roof, which means you'll be able to find your MINI in a car park. However, in a world full of high-riding crossovers, we're not sure this will be as practical as is claimed.

The interior is a big step on in terms of usability and quality, though. The design theme is similar inside, with oversized details such as the colour LED ring around the satellite navigation screen. Depending on driving mode, this changes colour and shows engine rpm, as well as the climate control temperature settings.

There's a bank of toggle switches under the ventilation controls and a few in the roof, too. Use them to flick back and forth through the different interior light colours, while at night the illuminated door panels give the heavily sculpted cabin a cool, fun ambience compared with its conventional competitors here. Also, the door mirror 'puddle lights' showing the MINI crest look cool.

This is about the limit of equipment, and as is typical for a MINI, options are eye-wateringly expensive. Our Cooper D Clubman manual test car costs £22,245 as standard. However, this example was loaded with kit, taking the total price to £30,160.

Metallic paintwork costs £515, the Chili Pack (including heated, half-leather-upholstered seats, parking sensors, LED headlamps and those extended interior lights among other items) is £2,785, while the Media Pack is priced at £1,010. This brings upgraded satellite navigation, a better Bluetooth set-up and MINI's connected services.

You can add to that even further if you want to personalise your car with different roof and mirror colours, as well as a graphics pack.



MINI Clubman

Practicality 4.2/5

NEW twin rear doors make the Clubman much more practical than its predecessor. However, MINI's kept the 'barn door'-style boot, which means – unlike with its hatchback rivals here – its tailgate is split in the middle. This is certainly a neat design feature, but it does hamper rear visibility, plus the 360-litre luggage bay is smaller than the competition.

Drop the rear seats and there's 1,250 litres available. Each chair folds individually for added versatility, but the middle seat is very small and it'll be a tight squeeze for three adults sitting across the back.

Cabin storage is good, with two cup-holders and plenty of trays and bins for trinkets. Yet although this new Clubman offers more space compared to the physically bigger V40, it's still not large enough to be truly practical.

Running costs 4.3/5

AS standard the MINI is cheaper than the Golf and V40, but both rivals come better equipped, so you'll have to upgrade with some of the expensive options already listed to match up on spec.

On top of that, lower residuals of 38.3 per cent mean the Clubman will depreciate by £1,755 more than the VW. However, it still loses less value than the V40. Also, MINI's five-year tlc servicing is a great deal, at £299.





Space

REAR seats are versatile, folding individually to provide up to 1,250 litres of load space. However, middle seat is cramped and three adults will struggle to get comfortable



CO₂/tax
109g/km
£20 or 19%



Practicality
Boot (seats up/down)
360/1,250 litres



Performance
0-60/30-70mph
9.9/8.6 seconds



Braking
70-0/60-0/30-0mph
57.7/45.0/10.3m



Running costs
49.7mpg (on test)
£53 fill-up



Interior

RING theme appears throughout the cabin, but kit is fairly basic. Twin rear doors can be hard to open in tight spaces, and hamper rear visibility. Performance and handling are fun



Driving 4.1/5

JUMP behind the wheel and it's obvious this is a MINI. It has the hatch's effervescent character, which eggs you on to go faster on a twisty road – and the chassis has the composure to live up to the billing.

Firm suspension transmits even small ridges into the cabin, but it rounds off big bumps and gives a great connection to the road – which is why the sensitive, light steering feels at odds. In corners the MINI darts towards the apex and is surprisingly agile, although it's prone to torque steer and follows cambers in the road.

The engine matches the chassis's eagerness, and with all that grip you can make the most of the 148bhp 2.0-litre turbodiesel. In our tests it did 0-60mph in 9.9 seconds – down on MINI's quoted times due to the slippery conditions. However, with 330Nm of torque, the Clubman proved its solid in-gear acceleration, taking 7.5 and 10 seconds to cover 50mph-70mph in fifth and sixth gears respectively.

This meant it was a little faster than its rivals here due to slightly shorter gearing. There wasn't much between our trio through the gears from 30mph-70mph, although the MINI was marginally slower.

So, performance is adequate, but it's more about how the Clubman feels to drive, with a positive shift, quick steering and taut but composed ride. To further heighten the responses, Sport mode sharpens the throttle and adds weight to the steering.

Testers' notes

"Our Cooper D isn't the most focused version and its ride is still firm. The damping is nicely controlled, but even though it gets a bespoke, softer tune of suspension, this may still be too much day-to-day on 18-inch rims. If you're considering a hot Cooper S or SD, take a long test drive to see if you can live with the firm set-up. Adaptive dampers are a £450 option."



James Disdale Road test editor

Ownership 3.8/5

MINI just edged Volvo in our Driver Power 2015 satisfaction survey, finishing one place ahead in the manufacturers' chart, in 16th. That came after the Brit brand's impressive 14-place rise, while Volvo was down six places on its 2014 showing. MINI was up one position to 10th in our dealer chart, too – 12 places ahead of Volvo and 20 ahead of Volkswagen.

The Clubman hasn't yet been tested by Euro NCAP, but by sharing its underpinnings with BMW's 2 Series Active Tourer MPV, it should score well in the next round of crash assessments. Isofix mounts and a tyre-pressure monitor are standard, while the £810 Driver Assistance Pack fitted here adds adaptive cruise. LED headlights are part of the Chili Pack.

Testers' notes

"If you don't fancy the snicky six-speed manual, this is the first MINI available with BMW's eight-speed auto. It costs an extra £1,615, but is as efficient as the manual so shouldn't cost you a penny more to run."



Dean Gibson Deputy road test ed.



MODEL TESTED: VW Golf 2.0 TDI (150) Match Edition
PRICE: £23,425 **ENGINE:** 2.0-litre 4cyl, 148bhp

AE THE Volkswagen Golf has long been one of the leading contenders in the compact hatchback class, and its combination of quality, driving talent and upmarket appeal will be tough for the new MINI Clubman to beat. There are myriad engine, transmission and body choices, but here we test one of the more conventional versions: the 148bhp 2.0 TDI Match Edition five-door with a six-speed manual gearbox, which costs £23,425 – although the car in our pictures is a 1.6 TDI.

Styling 3.7/5

THE Golf is at the opposite end of the design spectrum to the MINI Clubman. While the British-built machine is adorned with plenty of retro design cues and a unique silhouette, Volkswagen's big seller is restrained and conservative in comparison. The seventh-generation model is very much an evolution of what's gone before, although its sharp lines and simple detailing will appeal to buyers who don't want to make a show of themselves.

The low nose features a slender grille and sharp headlights, while creases flow from the front wings back along the sides of the car to the angular tail-lights. However, in terms of exterior styling flair, that's about it. Match models have 16-inch alloy wheels, which look a little on the small side, but they do give a soft and supple ride. If you want a bit more visual appeal, 17-inch options are available.

Climb inside, and again the Golf follows function compared to the MINI's focus on form. The layout is easy to get along with, and the cabin feels very well built, but the brushed silver dash trim, black soft-touch plastics and simple white lighting give it an air of restrained formality when compared to the MINI's 'nightclub on wheels' vibe. Again, for some buyers, that can be seen as a plus point, and there's absolutely no questioning how well the Golf is screwed together. The quality of the materials is hard to fault, too, while flock-lined door bins and cubbies mean the cabin stays mainly rattle-free.

Our Golf Match Edition has only just been launched, and adds £1,100 worth of kit for only £100 more than the standard Golf Match, including sat-nav and the Winter Pack's heated seats and screen washer jets. That's on top of a kit list that already includes adaptive cruise control, XDS electronic diff,

auto lights and wipers, Bluetooth plus a DAB radio. If you want parking sensors, heated seats and adaptive cruise on the MINI, you have to add them as optional extras – and this more than cancels out any price difference between the two models.

Driving 4.3/5

GO for the 2.0 TDI diesel version of the Golf, and you get the same 148bhp power output as the Cooper D Clubman. It has slightly less torque – 320Nm compared to the MINI's 330Nm – yet a slick gearshift and sharp throttle response mean the Volkswagen feels eager, with a sporty character that belies its restrained looks.

Both cars' performance figures were recorded in the wet for our test, but it was clear that the Golf managed to put its power down better than the MINI. It had less wheelspin and a 0-60mph time of 8.8 seconds, which was 1.1 seconds faster. Acceleration through the ratios was faster in the VW, although the Cooper D had a small advantage in-gear.

In corners the Golf is fun and engaging to drive, and it runs the MINI close for ultimate enjoyment. Models with 2.0-litre TDI power feature a more sophisticated multi-link rear suspension layout, and this boosts the car's cornering agility. Combined with the XDS electronic differential, the chassis delivers plenty of grip and sure-footed cornering that encourages you to drive harder. The stability control can't be turned off completely, although you have to be pushing quite hard to upset the Golf's balance.

While the VW is entertaining to drive, this doesn't have a negative effect on the car's comfort. The standard 16-inch wheels boost the ride, which is soft and compliant in most situations and is more composed than the Clubman's on rough surfaces.

Adaptive cruise control helps take the strain out of motorway driving, while the lack of engine, wind or road noise boosts comfort, too. That soft ride also gives the Golf a distinct advantage over the MINI for long-distance driving.

Running costs 4.4/5

AT £23,425, the Golf 2.0 TDI Match Edition is £1,180 more than the Cooper D Clubman. Standard kit is similar, although adding adaptive cruise, heated



On the road

EAGER character and sporty performance belie Golf's restrained styling. It was the fastest car of our trio

Volkswagen

Testers' notes

"So why have we tested the Clubman against the Golf hatch, and not the estate? Well, the five-door still has a bigger boot than the MINI, at 380 litres. The estate boasts a cavernous 605 litres. The Match Edition looks pretty restrained, but it can be just as entertaining as the Clubman on the right road. Add in a first-class cabin and excellent refinement, and it's a great all-round package."



James Disdale Road test editor

seats and parking sensors to the MINI all but cancels out the price difference. As for other running costs, the Golf has slightly lower emissions, at 106g/km, but road tax is the same as the MINI's, and while the higher list price means company car bills are bigger, higher-rate taxpayers pay only an extra £88 per year.

Residuals don't seem to have been affected by the VW diesel scandal so far, and 48 per cent for the 2.0 TDI Match Edition is around 10 per cent ahead of the Clubman's. VW offers a two-year service plan for £288, although MINI's five-year scheme is better value.





Ownership 3.6/5

THE past few months haven't been the best for VW, as its older models have come under scrutiny for their real-world exhaust emissions. VW's confirmed that the 2.0 TDI in the Golf meets current Euro 6 legislation, but the 'dieselgate' story is certain to have an impact on how VW is perceived by customers.

As it stands, the German company didn't do very well in our most recent Driver Power survey. Its showrooms came 30th out of 31 in the dealer chart, with owners' biggest gripe being a lack of communication. Dieselgate will only put added pressure on customer relations, and VW's franchises will do well to improve on their ranking next time.

The Golf itself came a respectable 30th in the top 200, although its platform-sharing cousins the SEAT Leon, Skoda Octavia and Audi A3 all finished ahead of it. At least the Golf has strong safety credentials. It achieved a five-star Euro NCAP crash test rating and has seven airbags, while other useful safety kit includes adaptive cruise control, a tiredness-alert system and tyre-pressure monitors.

en Golf



CO₂/tax
106g/km
£20 or 19%



Practicality
Boot (seats up/down)
380/1,270 litres



Performance
0-60/30-70mph
8.8/7.9 seconds



Braking
70-0/60-0/30-0mph
54.9/39.1/10.7m



Running costs
46.5mpg (on test)
£55 fill-up



Interior

GOLF cabin is functional and user-friendly, with a more formal air than the MINI's. Boot and rear are more spacious, too

Practicality 4.4/5

WHILE the Clubman's a bigger MINI, it still trails the Golf for space. The VW has a 380-litre boot, compared to 360 litres in the Cooper D, although the Golf has a lower floor and smaller floor area. Access is easier, due to the conventional tailgate and the slope of the rear end, which means you don't have to stoop to reach in.

Folding the back bench is easy, with the two levers on the seat shoulders, although you get only a 60:40 split compared to the MINI's 40:20:40.

Rear space is better in the Golf. You sit lower and in a more relaxed position, while the larger windows give a spacious feel. Our beige trim brightens things, but it'll show marks. Storage is good, with deep, flock-lined door bins, a big glovebox and an armrest cubby.

Testers' notes

"The Golf's conventional hatchback shape means it's more practical than the Clubman. And unlike in its competitor, it's extremely unlikely that you'll ever bang your head when you're reaching into the load bay."



Dean Gibson Deputy road test ed.

MODEL TESTED: Volvo V40 D3 SE**PRICE:** £23,770 **ENGINE:** 2.0-litre 4cyl, 148bhp

AE INTRODUCED back in 2012, the V40 was the first new Volvo to be launched after the manufacturer's takeover by the Chinese Geely brand in 2010. The hatchback is based on Ford running gear, although the D3 now uses Volvo's own 148bhp 2.0-litre diesel powerplant. Here we test the D3 SE, which is priced at £23,770.

Styling 3.9/5

THE V40 is quite a stylish-looking hatchback. As with the Golf it has a pretty conventional shape when compared to the MINI, but the Volvo's sweeping lines and small window area give it a sporty edge that the VW struggles to match. Also like the Golf, the V40 SE is a bit restrained compared to other models in the range. The car in our pictures is an SE Lux, which adds 17-inch wheels and xenon headlights, but on the SE model you get only modest 16-inch five-spoke wheels and halogen lamps.

Volvo's traditional circular badge, bisected by a diagonal line, defines the large front grille, and it's flanked by a pair of large headlamp clusters. The nose itself is quite low, and there's a distinctive body line that rises from the front wings, then kicks up on the back doors – a nod to the classic P1800 coupé – and flows into the tail-lights. The rear end features styling similar to the V40's predecessor, the C30, although while that car had a tailgate made of glass, the V40's has a small window area and a lot of gloss-black plastic instead.

Inside, the layout falls somewhere between those of its two competitors here. The dashboard has been designed to follow form over function, and looks quite neat thanks to the upright centre console and a bank of buttons. However, the cabin takes a bit of getting used to, and when you're on the move it's easy to confuse the four rotary dials that control the air-conditioning and stereo. The TFT dashboard is a £300 option, although it adds a bit of style to proceedings, and can be switched between three different colour schemes.

Standard equipment in the SE model is limited, but you get the essentials such as cruise and climate control, a leather-trimmed multifunction steering wheel and a DAB radio. Plus, safety kit is first-class. Options such as leather trim, sat-nav and different wheel designs are all available.

Driving 3.8/5

AS with the MINI and VW, the V40 tested here gets a 148bhp 2.0-litre diesel. This D3 engine matches the Golf's with 320Nm of torque, but as the Volvo is around 200kg heavier, it trailed against the clock.

Again, our performance testing was conducted in wet conditions, and the V40's 9.4-second 0-60mph time was half-a-second faster than the Clubman's. Yet an 8.4-second 30-70mph time fell between the MINI and the VW. In-gear, the V40 was slightly behind the MINI most of the time, due to slightly longer ratios.

The engine is quite rattly from cold, but it's smoother when warmed up and sounds harsh only at maximum revs. The gearbox has a slightly vague shift, with a bit of a slack feel to the long-throw lever, and changes don't like to be rushed.

And that just about sums up the V40's character: take it easy, and it's a refined and relaxing car to drive, but if you want to have some fun in bends you're better off with one of its rivals here. The Volvo feels heavier in corners and there's more body roll, too. Its

Testers' notes

"The V40 has always offered an alternative choice in the compact exec hatch class, and it certainly boasts some appealing traits. The cabin has its own style without resorting to retro touches as with the MINI, while the seats are supremely comfortable. It's also clear this is a car that's been developed in dark, wintry conditions. Six washer jets keep the screen free of grime, while the headlamps' full beam coverage is excellent."



James Disdale Road test editor

platform is developed from that of the second-generation Ford Focus, and there is a hint of that car's driving character. The steering lacks feedback, but it's reasonably direct and there's decent front end grip. As a result, the V40 is able to keep the MINI and Golf in sight on twisting back roads.

Even so, it's far better to revel in the Volvo's refinement. The soft suspension and small wheels deliver a comfortable ride, while the diesel quietens down at motorway speeds. Add in the superbly comfortable seats, and the V40 is a relaxing choice.

Ownership 4.0/5

THE V40 is one of the safest cars on the road, and it earned the highest percentage scores of any car tested by Euro NCAP when it was put under the microscope in 2012. As with the Golf you get seven airbags, while other safety kit includes City Braking, anti-whiplash headrests, seatbelt detection on all five chairs and a pedestrian airbag. The latter inflates and pushes the bonnet up to help reduce the risk of injury in the event of a collision with a person. Blind-spot detection and lane keeping are also offered as options, at £500 and £700 respectively.

Volvo has an upmarket image, but as with its competitors here its dealers fail to impress. The network finished 22nd out of 31 in our Driver Power 2015 dealer survey – well ahead of VW's garages, but behind MINI's.

The V40 itself ranked an impressive 15th in our top 200 – 15 places ahead of the Golf – but the MINI hatch finished ninth. Still, owners praised the Volvo's comfort, running costs and reliability.

Running costs 3.8/5

THE V40 D3 SE costs £23,770, which is a substantial £1,525 more than the Cooper D Clubman. Standard kit isn't quite up there with the Golf's, and you need to add sat-nav (£900) to match the MINI, while adaptive cruise is part of a £1,900 Driver Support Pack. Meanwhile, heated seats are in the £500 Winter Pack, which puts the Volvo's price well ahead of both rivals here. However, if you're a company car buyer, 99g/km CO₂ emissions are to the V40's advantage.

Those low emissions also mean free road tax for private buyers, while economy of 47.7mpg on test was reasonable. A 62-litre fuel tank is the largest here, giving the V40 a longer range than either rival.

Volvo offers fixed-price service plans of varying lengths, although the three-year scheme costs a substantial £821, which is considerably more than the packages available from MINI or VW.



Volvo V40



Practicality 3.5/5

THE V40 isn't the most practical hatchback. The combination of stylish design and small dimensions means there's only 335 litres of boot space on offer, which is 25 litres behind the MINI. Still, the tailgate opens wide, and you can spec a versatile load floor for £100, which adds a narrow underfloor storage area.

Getting in the back is tricky due to the sculpted doors and body, while space is also a bit tight. Dark colours and small back windows mean occupants can feel hemmed in, too. At least all the seats are comfortable. Stowage is reasonable, although the glovebox is smaller than the Golf's, and centre console storage isn't as good.

**CO₂/tax**99g/km
£0 or 17%**Practicality**Boot (seats up/down)
335/1,032 litres**Performance**0-60/30-70mph
9.4/8.4 seconds**Braking**70-0/60-0/30-0mph
60.7/43.8/11.1m**Running costs**47.7mpg (on test)
£68 fill-up**On the road**

AS long as you don't push it hard, the V40 is a refined car; but press on, and the vague steering lets it down, while the car's weight shows in corners

HEAD TO HEAD**Accessibility**

THE Clubman's double rear doors can be hard to open in tight spots. What's more, the extended roofline means you have to stoop slightly to reach in, and you could bang your head if you're not careful.

Still, back seat access is good; the MINI has longer doors than the hatchback, so access is just as easy as in the Golf.

**Personalisation**

THERE'S a raft of options on the Clubman, including a variety of wheel designs, contrast roof colours and interior upgrades. Our car's illuminated door trims add colour to the cabin at night.

There are fewer options on the VW and Volvo, although the latter does have a range of alloys.

**Business costs**

THE MINI and VW are more expensive to run as company cars than the Volvo. Its 99g/km emissions mean higher-rate taxpayers will face an annual Benefit In Kind bill of £1,623; the Clubman costs £1,688 a year and the Golf £1,776.

**Interior**

WHILE dash looks great, it's not the easiest to use; stylish TFT unit costs £300, plus leather trim is optional as well

Space

REAR seats are comfortable, yet space is a bit tight. Boot is smallest on test, although tailgate opens wide to allow good access

**Testers' notes**

"Volvo makes a big noise in its marketing material that the V40 is Made In Sweden, but it's actually built at the company's plant in Ghent, Belgium, alongside the S60 saloon, V60 estate and XC60 crossover."

**Sean Carson** Senior road tester



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Figures

**Volkswagen Golf
2.0 TDI (150)
Match Edition**

**MINI Cooper D
Clubman**

**Volvo
V40 D3 SE**


On the road price/total as tested	£23,425/£23,425*	LIST PRICE THE Golf is more expensive than the Clubman, but it gets adaptive cruise and heated seats as standard.	£22,245/£30,160	SERVICING MINI's tlc package offers great value, costing £60 a year, compared to Volvo's steep £274 annual rate.	£23,770/£30,000	
Residual value (after 3yrs/36,000)	£11,455/48.9%		£8,520/38.3%		£10,005/42.3%	
Depreciation	£11,970		£13,725		£13,715	
Annual tax liability std/higher rate	£888/£1,776		£844/£1,688		£806/£1,613	
Annual fuel cost (12k/20k miles)	£1,290/£2,151		£1,207/£2,012		£1,258/£2,097	
Ins. group/quote/road tax band/cost	16/£562/B/£20		18/£513/B/£20		21/£537/A/£0	
Cost of 1st/2nd/3rd service	£288 (2yrs)		£299 (5yrs/50k)*		£821 (3yrs)	
Length/wheelbase	4,255/2,637mm		4,253/2,670mm		4,369/2,647mm	DIMENSIONS IT'S the longest and widest car here, but the V40 uses its length to create a dynamic look rather than add practicality.
Height/width	1,452/1,799mm		1,441/1,800mm		1,420/ 1,857mm	
Engine	4cyl in-line/1,968cc	BIGGEST BOOT IT has the shortest wheelbase and is marginally narrower than its rivals, but the VW offers the biggest boot with the seats up or down.	4cyl in-line/1,995cc		4cyl in-line/1,969cc	
Peak power/revs	148/3,500 bhp/rpm		148/4,000 bhp/rpm		148/3,750 bhp/rpm	
Peak torque/revs	320/1,750 Nm/rpm		330/1,750 Nm/rpm		320/1,750 Nm/rpm	
Transmission	6-spd man/fwd		6-spd man/fwd		6-spd man/fwd	
Fuel tank capacity/spare wheel	50 litres/space saver		48 litres/£120		62 litres/£150	
Boot capacity (seats up/down)	380/1,270 litres		360/1,250 litres		335/1,032 litres	INTERVALS VOLVO states a fixed mileage for service intervals, but the 18,000-mile maximum is quite generous compared to some other rivals.
Kerbweight/payload/towing weight	1,354/506/1,800kg		1,320/530/1,300kg		1,561/419/1,500kg	
Turning circle	10.9 metres		11.0 metres		10.8 metres	
Basic warranty (miles)/recovery	3yrs (60k)/3yrs	INTERVALS STANDARD service intervals for Golf are 9,000 miles or one year; high-mileage drivers can benefit from distance-based maintenance.	3yrs (unlimited)/3yrs	DRIVER POWER IN both the manufacturer and dealer rankings, MINI has the edge over VW, Volvo and its parent company, BMW.	3yrs (60k)/3yrs	
Service intervals/UK dealers	Variable/223		Variable/148		18k miles (1yr)/109	
Driver Power manufacturer/dealer pos.	22nd/30th		16th/10th		17th/22nd	
Euro NCAP: Adult/child/ped./stars	94/89/65/5 (2012)		79/73/66/4 (hatch)		98/75/88/5 (2012)	
0-60/30-70mph	8.8/7.9 secs (wet)		9.9/8.6 secs (wet)		9.4/8.4 secs (wet)	LOW EMISSIONS VOLVO'S D3 diesel has been designed with business drivers in mind, and users can reap the benefits of its 99g/km emissions.
30-50mph in 3rd/4th	3.7/6.3 secs		3.8/5.4 secs		3.5/5.4 secs	
50-70mph in 5th/6th	8.5/10.4 secs		7.5/10.0 secs		8.2/11.0 secs	
Top speed/rpm at 70mph	134mph/1,800rpm		132mph/1,950rpm		130mph/1,800rpm	
Braking 70-0/60-0/30-0mph	54.9/39.1/10.7m (wet)		57.7/45.0/10.3m (wet)		60.7/43.8/11.1m (wet)	
Noise outside/idle/30/70mph	69/49/58/65dB		70/47/57/67dB		66/47/57/64dB	
Auto Express econ (mpg/impl)/range	46.5/10.2/511 miles		49.7/10.9/525 miles		47.7/10.5/651 miles	
Govt urban/extra-urban/combined	56.5/78.5/68.9mpg		58.9/76.3/68.9mpg		64.2/80.7/74.3mpg	
Govt urban/extra-urban/combined	12.4/17.3/15.2mpl		13.0/16.8/15.2mpl		14.1/17.8/16.3mpl	
Actual/claimed CO ₂ /tax bracket	163/106g/km/19%	EXTRA KIT MATCH Edition adds nav, Winter Pack (including heated seats and washer jets) and online services. It's £1,100 of kit for £100 extra.	152/109g/km/19%	EXTRA KIT GO wild with the options and you could easily add £10,000 to the Clubman's list price. MINI does offer good-value packs, though.	159/ 99g/km/17%	
Airbags/Isofix/park sensors/camera	Seven/yes/yes/£165		Six/yes/ £320 /£310		Eight/yes/£325/£375	
Auto box/stability ctrl/adaptive cruise	£1,415/yes/yes		£1,595/yes/ £810		£1,485/yes/£1,900*	
Climate control/leather/heated seats	£415/£2,115/ yes		£460/£1,550/£270		Yes/£900/£500*	
Met paint/xenon lights/keyless go	£540/£820/£365		£515/ £735 (LED)/£350		£550/£1,350/£550	
Sat-nav/USB/DAB radio/Bluetooth	Yes /yes/yes/yes		Yes/yes/yes/yes		£800 /yes/yes/yes	

Results

VOLKSWAGEN

1st

IN some ways it's a sensible choice, but the Golf's depth of talent is something these two rivals struggle to match. The 2.0 TDI is an excellent performer, with a great mix of power and economy, while the chassis delivers a combination of sharp handling and cruising comfort that makes it hard to beat. The new Match Edition adds great value for money to the mix, too.



MINI

2nd

THERE'S no denying that the Clubman is the most practical new-generation MINI, thanks to its bigger boot and rear space, but it's not without its flaws. The looks are more awkward than ever, while the double back doors are more a talking point than useful. Still, if you want to stand out from the crowd, and want an efficient yet sporty-handling family car, it ticks the boxes.



VOLVO

3rd

THIRD place is no slight on the V40, because it still has plenty going for it. The cabin is refreshingly modern, and the low-emission D3 engine makes it an attractive company car. However, it's not the most spacious choice, and is poorly equipped and expensive to buy. It's quite relaxing to drive, though, and the raft of safety kit isn't to be sniffed at.



*Part of pack. In red = equipment fitted to our test car. Insurance quotes from AA (Tel 0800 107 0680 or www.theAA.com) for a 42-year-old living in Banbury, Oxon, with three penalty points. Residual values provided by CDL VIP Data.

How can VW win after 'dieselgate'?

WITH diesels featuring VW's 'defeat device' leaving question marks over emissions tests and news that UK buyers are being denied compensation, can the Golf still claim a road test win? Ignore the brand's recent troubles, and the evergreen hatch is still a great car – few family

models have such a breadth of talent. More importantly, in a recent German independent study of eight diesels in partnership with UK specialist Emissions Analytics, the latest Euro 6 Golf 2.0 TDI was by far the least polluting car. Perhaps there's light at the end of the tunnel for VW.



AE TRACK days are more popular than ever, as keen drivers seek out safe thrills away from congested and speed camera covered public roads. As a result, there's a thriving industry in cars that are designed with race circuits in mind.

Most are lightweight and relatively affordable models such as the Caterham Seven and Lotus Elise, but there's also a growing trend for more exotic machinery.

One of the latest arrivals is the Porsche 911 GT3 RS. Based on the standard GT3, this new model draws heavily on the brand's extensive motorsport knowledge to provide a true 'race car for the road' experience.

It has all the right ingredients to succeed, as it features a high-revving 495bhp engine, extensive aerodynamic enhancements, a bespoke suspension set-up and four-wheel steering. Yet Porsche also claims that this RS is the most user-friendly model yet – a car you can drive to work in during the week, before pounding around a circuit at weekends.

Yet it's not the only sports car that's been given a circuit flavour. The Nissan GT-R Track Edition combines the explosive engine and four-wheel-drive transmission of the regular model with suspension, tyres and stronger bodyshell of the wild Nismo version.

Both these cars offer intense on-track excitement, but at this rarefied price point they also have to be usable every day. We hit road and track to see which of these contenders gets your pulse racing faster and leaves a bigger grin on your face.



WILD at heart

Porsche's new 911 GT3 RS takes on a maxed out Nissan GT-R in a track and road battle

Nissan GT-R Track Edition

Price: £88,560

Engine: 3.8-litre twin-turbo V6, 542bhp

0-60mph: 3.4 seconds

Test economy: 17.7mpg/3.9mpl

CO₂: 275g/km

Annual road tax: £505



Pictures: Pete Gibson Location: Blyton Park Driving Centre, Lincolnshire



Porsche 911 GT3 RS

Price: £132,451

Engine: 4.0-litre flat-six, 495bhp

0-60mph: 3.7 seconds

Test economy: 23.2mpg/5.1mpl

CO₂: 296g/km

Annual road tax: £505

MODEL TESTED: Porsche 911 GT3 RS

PRICE: £132,451 ENGINE: 4.0-litre flat six, 495bhp

AE THE Porsche 911 is one of the most enduring and capable sports cars ever. Over a period of five decades, the design of the rear-engined machine has been carefully honed to deliver a brilliant blend of driving thrills and everyday usability.

A recent facelift has seen the adoption of turbocharged engines across almost the entire range. The exceptions are the race-bred GT3 and GT3 RS models, which retain naturally aspirated motors for ultimate driver involvement. It's the latter, more powerful model we put to the test here.

Styling 4.2/5

FEW cars wear their high-performance heart on their sleeve as proudly as the GT3 RS. Almost every surface of the standard 911 body has been altered and enhanced in the pursuit of speed, and it looks even wilder than the already racy GT3.

At the front, there's a deeper front spoiler, while the tops of the front wings now feature large vents designed to boost downforce. There's also a double bubble roof and the same wider rear arches and air intakes as the Turbo model, plus at the rear there's that towering spoiler that's claimed to generate 80 per cent of the downforce of the actual racing variant.

Lightweight materials are used throughout, including carbon fibre-reinforced plastic for the bonnet, aluminium doors, a magnesium roof and polycarbonate rear windows and screen. All in, the 911 tips the scales at 1,420kg, which is a hefty 320kg less than the bulky Nissan.

The stripped-out race car theme continues inside, where you'll find a pair of lightweight bucket seats, a suede-covered steering wheel with a 12 o'clock marker at the top of the rim and a large rollcage in place of the standard car's small rear seats. There's also more bare plastic than in more mainstream versions, but the interior still feels upmarket and solidly built.

As you'd expect from a pared-back performance car, there's not a huge amount of standard kit. Bi-xenon lights, climate control and a USB connection all feature, but you'll have to spend an eye-watering £3,180 on sat-nav, Bluetooth, DAB radio and cruise control. All are fitted as standard on the GT-R.

Driving 5.0/5

BUY a GT3 RS and it'll be driving thrills rather than standard kit that'll be at the top of your shopping list – and Porsche has pulled out all the stops here.

The naturally aspirated 4.0-litre flat-six delivers a hefty 495bhp at a dizzying 8,250rpm, while the seven-speed twin-clutch gearbox has been recalibrated for even faster shifts. Elsewhere, there's a wider track, the large wheels (20 inches at front and 21 inches at the rear) are made of forged alloy and the front and rear suspension is fully adjustable. Other highlights include the four-wheel-steer system from the GT3, adaptive dampers and sticky Michelin Cup Sport 2 tyres.

Launch control is standard and it allowed the RS to blast from 0-60mph in just 3.7 seconds, which was a fraction slower than the more powerful Nissan. The GT3 is 172Nm down on torque compared to the Nissan, with a figure of 460Nm. As a result, it trailed the GT-R during all our in-gear tests. However, if you're willing to work the Porsche's engine hard, it's as explosively quick as its rival in the real world.

And then there's the noise. From a gravelly and purposeful idle through to a spine-tingling howl at 8,000rpm, the RS always keeps you entertained. Yet

Testers' notes

"A drive in the 911 is as close as you'll get to driving a proper GT racer on the road. With its incredible aerodynamic additions, tuneable flat-six engine and brain-scrambling grip, the GT3 RS delivers an immersive driving experience. It's a car that rewards effort and reveals even greater depths the longer you spend with it. On a track the GT-R's charms soon wear thin, but in the 911 you'll go around and around until the fuel runs out."



James Disdale Road test editor

it's the Porsche's ability through corners that takes your breath away. The car's aggressive looks would lead you to believe it was intimidating to drive, but it doesn't take long before you're revelling in the rear-engined machine's limpet-like traction, incredible balance and terrific feedback.

The steering is quick and fizzles with useful feel, while the almost unbreakable grip on turn-in allows you to carry huge speed into a bend. On a track it inspires real confidence, and with the electronic driver aids switched on you can explore its limits, and your own, in safety. Switch everything off and you'll need your wits about you if the rear starts to slide, but even then the car's intentions are clearly telegraphed.

Our 911 also benefited from the optional carbon ceramic brakes that delivered eye-popping and fade-free stopping power. Even without this set-up, the Porsche will effortlessly soak up constant fast laps, while the heavyweight Nissan will soon wilt.

Away from the track, the RS is less compromised than you'd expect. Yes, there's plenty of road noise, but it's far from intrusive, while the adaptive dampers provide a firm but controlled ride..

Ownership 3.9/5

PORSCHE has a strong reputation for building cars that are as durable as they are desirable, and that's reflected in its sixth place finish in our Driver Power 2015 satisfaction survey. And while servicing costs aren't cheap, you will be looked after by your dealer, with the brand's network taking eighth in our poll.

The 911 hasn't been tested by Euro NCAP, but six airbags, two-stage stability control and upgraded brakes and suspension inspire confidence, as does the addition of a bolt-in roll cage. But there are no hi-tech aids such as autonomous emergency braking.

Running costs 2.3/5

BUYERS of these types of car will rarely worry about running costs. That said, the 911's £43,891 price premium over the Nissan is jaw-dropping, while CO₂ emissions of 296g/km will result in higher-rate business users forking out £19,432 a year in Benefit in Kind tax. Use the Porsche's prodigious performance, and fuel economy will dip into single figures.

However, there are some upsides. Our experts have calculated residuals of 48 per cent, but we've seen nearly new examples change hands for close to double the list price. Plus, the GT3 RS is a surefire future classic and can be viewed as an investment. And if you use the car on track, it'll go through far fewer sets of tyres and brake pads than the heavy GT-R.



CO₂/tax

296g/km
£505 or 37%



Practicality

Boot
125 litres



Performance

0-60/30-70mph
3.7/2.5 seconds

Porsche 911





Extreme

FRONT wing vents help to generate downforce, and big alloys hide powerful carbon ceramic brakes. GT3 RS is really agile and lots of fun on a track



Braking

70-0/60-0/30-0mph
38.6/25.1/8.6m



Running costs

23.2mpg (on test)
£73 fill-up

11 GT3 RS



Stripped out

SWITCH blanks on console show how RS is pared back of kit. Fabric door pulls save a few kg. Rollcage replaces the rear seats

Practicality 2.4/5

PRACTICALITY is unlikely to be at the top of your shopping list when choosing either of these cars, but the 911 is still usable every day. Although the small rear seats have been removed to make way for the rollcage, there's a handy storage shelf underneath the lattice work of tubing. And while the front seats are of the fixed back bucket type, they are supremely supportive and it's easy to get comfortable behind the wheel.

Elsewhere, there are some narrow door pockets, a shallow lidded cubby between the front seats, a decent glovebox and a pair of cup-holders that slide out of the dash. In the nose of the car is a 125-litre boot, which is 190 litres smaller than the GT-R's load bay. But it's deep and will hold a couple of small suitcases.

Testers' notes

"The GT3 RS is a hardcore performance car. Yet it's much easier to live with than you'd think. The controlled ride, excellent visibility and perfect driving position make it an almost sensible daily driver."



Dean Gibson Dep road test ed.

MODEL TESTED: Nissan GT-R Track Edition

PRICE: £88,560 ENGINE: 3.8-litre twin-turbo V6, 542bhp

AE THE GT-R has always taken the hi-tech route to high performance – and the current model is no exception. Featuring four-wheel drive, twin turbochargers, a dual-clutch gearbox and adaptive dampers, it delivers a masterclass in cutting-edge control systems. The Track Edition is the latest addition to the range, and combines the standard car's running gear with the flagship Nismo model's suspension, stiffer bodyshell and stickier tyres.

Styling 3.6/5

COMPARED to the wild and aero-enhanced 911, the Nismo-tweaked Nissan looks a little restrained. The only real clue to the car's track-honed credentials are the eye-catching six-spoke GT500 alloy wheels that are finished in a dark anthracite.

The rest of the car is standard GT-R, which means you get the same bluff nose treatment, slab sides and angular roofline. You'd struggle to call it handsome, but details such as the round tail-lamps, quad exhausts and large rear spoiler give it plenty of menace.

Yet while the GT-R doesn't look as obviously track-focused as the Porsche, there is one major unseen change to the body aimed at improving performance. Like the wild Nismo flagship, the Track Edition gets a bonded bodywork structure that increases rigidity, which helps locate the suspension more precisely and so sharpen the handling.

Inside, the GT-R is starting to show its age. The blocky dashboard architecture features switches and dials that wouldn't look out of place on an eighties hi-fi system, while some of the plastics have a low-rent look and feel. There are very few changes over the standard car, either, with the addition of a pair of chunky Recaro front seats being the only major update. Still, you get plenty of standard kit.

The list of gadgets and gizmos includes sat-nav, a parking camera, keyless entry, an 11-speaker Bose stereo and LED headlamps. The infotainment system also comprises a comprehensive performance data logger, which records everything from lap times to peak G-forces. Better still, you can plug your computer into the car and download all the information.

Driving 4.7/5

THE Track Edition uses the standard GT-R's twin-turbo 3.8-litre V6 engine, which is paired with a six-speed twin-clutch box and permanent 4WD.

With 542bhp and 632Nm of torque, the Nissan was blisteringly quick at the track, completing the 0-60mph sprint in a launch control-assisted 3.4 seconds. Yet it was the in-gear pace that dealt a hammer blow to the Porsche. The third gear 30-50mph test took just 2.1 seconds, while 50-70mph in sixth was all over in 5.1 seconds.

On the road, the Nissan is devastatingly fast. With so much torque available at just 3,200rpm, it accelerates with real ferocity in any gear – you need to work the Porsche's flat-six hard to keep up with the Track Edition. Yet while the engine delivers explosive performance, it can't match the 911's unit for drama. There's a purposeful burble at idle, while accelerating hard results in a deep growl overlaid by turbo whistle and transmission whine, but it's not an engine that you'll want to work hard just to enjoy the noise.

It's a similar story in corners, where the Track Edition is brutally effective, yet lacks the finesse of the Porsche. There's a surprising amount of steering feel, while the Dunlop SP Sport Maxx tyres provide

Testers' notes

"The combination of a mighty turbocharged engine and sophisticated four-wheel drive mean few cars cover ground as quickly as the Nissan. Yet it never shrinks around like the involving 911. No matter how much time you spend behind the wheel of the Track Edition, you're always aware of its bulky dimensions and hefty kerbweight, while there's a nagging feeling the electronics are doing much of the work."



James Disdale Road test editor

stunning grip once warmed through, helping keep the car locked on your chosen line. Plus, the Nismo suspension delivers rock-solid body control. Yet despite its four-wheel-drive set-up, the Nissan doesn't offer much more traction than the 911 – even with the stability control switched on. In damp or wet conditions, the GT-R will spin up its wheels.

You can choose between Normal, Track and R modes, each of which alters the steering, throttle and gearbox responses. Turn off the electronic stability control and the Nissan initially feels more accessible than the 911, as the 4WD quickly shuffles torque between the axles to stabilise any slides. But push hard for a few laps of a circuit and the Nissan's weight begins to tell, as the brakes and tyres lose their bite.

In the real world, this is less of a problem. Driven within its considerably high limits, the GT-R covers ground at an alarming rate. Yet while the Porsche feels like it's dancing its way down the road, the Nissan seems to be pummeling it into submission – it's very effective, but nowhere near as rewarding.

Take it easier and the GT-R and the 911 are evenly matched. Its ride is firmer than the GT3 RS's, even in Comfort mode, but greater sound deadening and a stereo that features active noise cancellation make it a slightly quieter long-distance cruiser.

Ownership 3.5/5

THE GT-R delivers rocketship performance and agile handling, but the Nissan badge will put off some buyers. And those more used to premium brands such as Porsche are likely to be deterred by Nissan's 28th place finish in our Driver Power 2015 owner survey. Plus, the brand's dealers were a lowly 29th.

At least the GT-R's safety credentials are a match for the 911. All versions get six airbags, stability control and tyre-pressure monitoring. However, the car doesn't benefit from the brand's hi-tech Safety Shield tech that's seen on cheaper models, such as the Note.

Running costs 3.4/5

WHEN it comes to price, the £88,560 Nissan has the Porsche beaten hands down. It's also better equipped, with sat-nav and a DAB radio both included. Yet while the GT-R has fractionally lower CO₂ emissions, its figure of 275g/km still places it in the highest band for VED and Benefit in Kind.

Like the GT3 RS, the Nissan has a hefty appetite for fuel and we recorded a sobering figure of 17.7mpg. Take your GT-R to the odd track day and you can expect to eat through tyres and brakes far more quickly than in the lightweight Porsche.



Nissan GT-R



Practicality 2.9/5

BOTH our contenders have a strong track focus, but it's the Nissan that makes more of a case as daily transport. While its cabin looks a little dated, it's comprehensively equipped and features a pair of small back seats – although these are really only for occasional adult use. Leather-trimmed and heated front seats also add some luxury compared to the pared-back Porsche. Plus, there's a pair of useful door bins and a number of cup-holders.

The Nissan's tailgate lifts to reveal a small opening, but there's a decent 315-litre capacity, which is 190 litres more than the 911. You can also use the small rear seats for any overspill luggage.

**CO₂/tax**

275g/km

£505 or 37%

**Practicality**

Boot

315 litres

**Performance**

0-60/30-70mph

3.4/2.9 seconds

**Braking**

70-0/60-0/30-0mph

40.3/28.5/8.3m

**Running costs**

17.7mpg (on test)

£85 fill-up

HEAD TO HEAD

Engines

BOTH cars feature six-cylinder units and are within 50bhp of one another. But they're very different.

The 911's naturally aspirated flat-six is pure race car, with a screaming 8,500rpm red line, razor-sharp response and exotic materials. The GT-R's hand-built twin-turbo isn't as characterful, yet it's brutally effective, giving 0-60mph in 3.4 seconds.



Extreme tyres

TO maximise track performance, the 911 is fitted with Michelin Cup Sport 2 tyres. These have a 265 section at the front and a mammoth 325 at the rear.

The Nissan's Dunlop SP Sport Maxx tyres are narrower, at 255 and 285 respectively. Both sets of rubber are a little twitchy when wet, but deliver staggering grip once warmed through.



Aerodynamics

THE Nissan's body is virtually identical to the standard car's, but the 911 has plenty of aero enhancements. The unique vented front wings generate up to 110kg of downforce, while the vast rear spoiler creates 220kg. Overall, it offers twice as much downforce as Porsche's 997 GT3 RS 4.0.

On the edge

GT-R serves up ferocious pace, and there's plenty of feel through the steering, but it can't match the driving finesse of the Porsche



Interior

HEATED leather seats give luxury feel; paddles work well. Rear seats add versatility

Testers' notes

"If this Track Edition model isn't hardcore enough, there's always the ultra-rare Nismo. With 592bhp, a wild aerodynamic bodykit and even more focused suspension, the £125,000 car is a bit too stiff for the road."



Sean Carson Senior road tester

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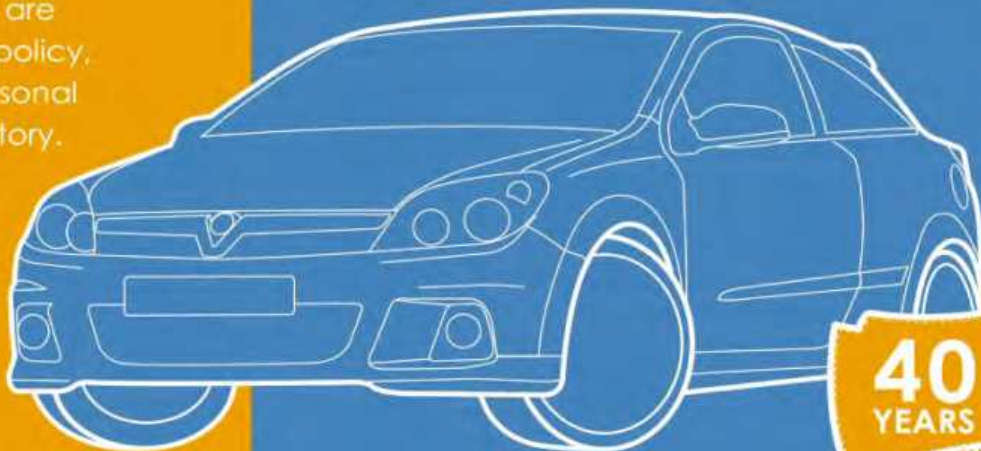
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Figures

Porsche 911 GT3 RS



Nissan GT-R Track Edition



On the road price/total as tested	£132,451/£145,087	RESIDUALS	£88,560/£89,410	
Residual value (after 3yrs/36,000)	£63,603/48.0%	A RETAINED value of 48 per cent is decent. But nearly new GT3s are now selling for over £300,000 (see panel, right).	£45,298/51.2%	
Depreciation	£68,848		£43,262	
Annual tax liability std/higher rate	£9,716/£19,432		£6,468/£12,936	
Annual fuel cost (12k/20k miles)	£2,690/£4,483		£3,526/£5,876	
Ins. group/quote/road tax band/cost	50/£1,209/M/£505		50/£1,310/M/£505	
Cost of 1st/2nd/3rd service	£700/£1,250/£700*		£297/£416/£727	
Length/wheelbase	4,545/2,456mm	ENGINE	4,870/2,780mm	BODYWORK
Height/width	1,291/1,880mm	REMARKABLE flat-six delivers a power output of 124bhp per litre – one of the highest figures ever for a naturally aspirated engine.	1,370/1,895mm	TRACK Edition looks the same as the standard car, and has identical dimensions, but it features a stronger, bonded Nismo shell.
Engine	Flat-six/3,996cc		V6/3,799cc	
Peak power/revs	495/8,250 bhp/rpm		542/6,400 bhp/rpm	
Peak torque/revs	460/6,250 Nm/rpm		632/3,200 Nm/rpm	
Transmission	7-spd twin-clutch/rwd		6-spd twin-clutch/4wd	
Fuel tank capacity/spare wheel	64 litres/foam		74 litres/foam	WEIGHT
Boot capacity	125 litres		315 litres	ADDITION of all-wheel drive and luxury kit results in hefty kerbweight of 1,740kg. That's a significant 320kg more than the stripped-out 911.
Kerbweight/payload	1,420/300kg		1,740/460kg	
Turning circle/drag coefficient	11.0 metres/0.34Cd	BRAKES	12.0 metres/0.26Cd	
Basic warranty (miles)/recovery	3yrs (unltd)/3yrs	CARBON ceramic brakes stopped the 911 from 70mph in only 38.6 metres – the same length as the Highway Code allows for 50-0mph.	3yrs (60k)/3yrs	
Service intervals/UK dealers	12,000 miles (2yrs)/36		12,000 miles (1yr)/225	
Driver Power manufacturer/dealer pos.	6th/8th		28th/29th	
0-60/30-70mph	3.7/2.5 secs		3.4/2.9 secs	
30-50mph in 3rd/4th	2.5/3.3 secs		2.1/3.3 secs	
50-70mph in 5th/6th/7th	4.0/5.0/6.1 secs		3.4/5.1 secs/N/A	
Top speed/rpm at 70mph	193mph/2,900rpm		196mph/2,400rpm	
Braking 70-0/60-0/30-0mph	38.6/25.1/8.6m		40.3/28.5/8.3m	
Noise outside/idle/30/70mph	74/59/67/74dB		65/55/69/72dB	
Auto Express econ (mpg/mp)/range	23.2/5.1/327 miles	STANDARD KIT	17.7/3.9/288 miles	FUEL ECONOMY
Govt urban/extra-urban/combined	14.7/31.7/22.2mpg	AS ever, Porsche is a bit miserly with kit: sat-nav, a DAB radio and Bluetooth will all cost extra. Still, in a stripped-out special, we can forgive this.	16.6/32.1/23.9mpg	WE recorded a best figure of 17.7mpg, while economy slumped to 6.1mpg during our performance testing. Either way, Nissan will spend a lot of time at filling stations.
Govt urban/extra-urban/combined	3.2/7.0/4.9mpl		3.6/7.1/5.3mpl	
Actual/claimed CO ₂ /tax bracket	281/296g/km/37%		369/275g/km/37%	
Airbags/Isofix/park sensors/camera	Six/£122/no/no		Six/yes/£370/yes	
Automatic box/stability/cruise control	Yes/yes/£267		Yes/yes/yes	
Climate control/leather/heated seats	Yes/£2,064/£320		Yes/yes/yes	
Metallic paint/xenon lights/keyless go	Yes/yes/no		£850/LEDs/yes	
Sat-nav/USB/DAB radio/Bluetooth	£2,141/y/£324/£448		Yes/yes/yes/yes	

Investing in a GT3

Track-honed Porsche 911s instantly rocket in value

OUR experts have calculated residual values for both the contenders in this test, but for the Porsche these figures are almost meaningless.

Such is the reputation of 911 RS models, this all-new version has attained instant classic status. As a result, prices for the 991 generation have already gone through the roof.

If you can get on the waiting list, a box-fresh model will set you back £132,451. If you can't wait, then second-hand examples with a handful of miles on the clock are now changing hands for over £300,000!

These eye-watering prices aren't without precedent, however: values of the previous 997-generation, limited-run GT3 RS 4.0 now regularly exceed £400,000.

It's the 1973 original that set the tone for these ever-increasing values, though. Just over 1,500 examples of the legendary Carrera RS 2.7-engined model were produced, each designed to go racing.

Over the years, the car's iconic status has seen values rocket, and it's not unusual to see mint versions change hands for a cool £1million.

Assuming that this trend continues, buying a GT3 RS could be a better bet than investing in a pension.

Results

PORSCHE

WE wanted to find the car that delivered more thrills on the road and the track – and in this respect, the Porsche is almost without equal. Outrageously fast and hugely involving, the new GT3 RS redefines what's possible for a road-legal car to do on a circuit. Yet it's remarkably easy to live with as well as surprisingly efficient. It's also a sure-fire future classic.



1st

NISSAN

NEARLY £90,000 may seem a lot for a Nissan, but money will be no object for buyers as this Track Edition is the best GT-R yet. With ferocious performance, agile handling and plenty of kit, the car still delivers lots of bang for your buck. It just struggles to contain its weight after a few hard laps, the firm ride proves irritating on the road and it has a real thirst for fuel.



2nd

*Estimate based on 997-generation GT3 RS. Insurance quotes from AA (Tel 0800 107 0680 or www.theAA.com) for a 42-year-old living in Banbury, Oxon, with three penalty points. Residual values provided by CDL VIP Data.

COMING SOON

Is it worth waiting for this model?

BMW M4 GTS

DUE: June 2016 **PRICE:** £122,000

ENGINE: 3.0-litre 6cyl, 493bhp

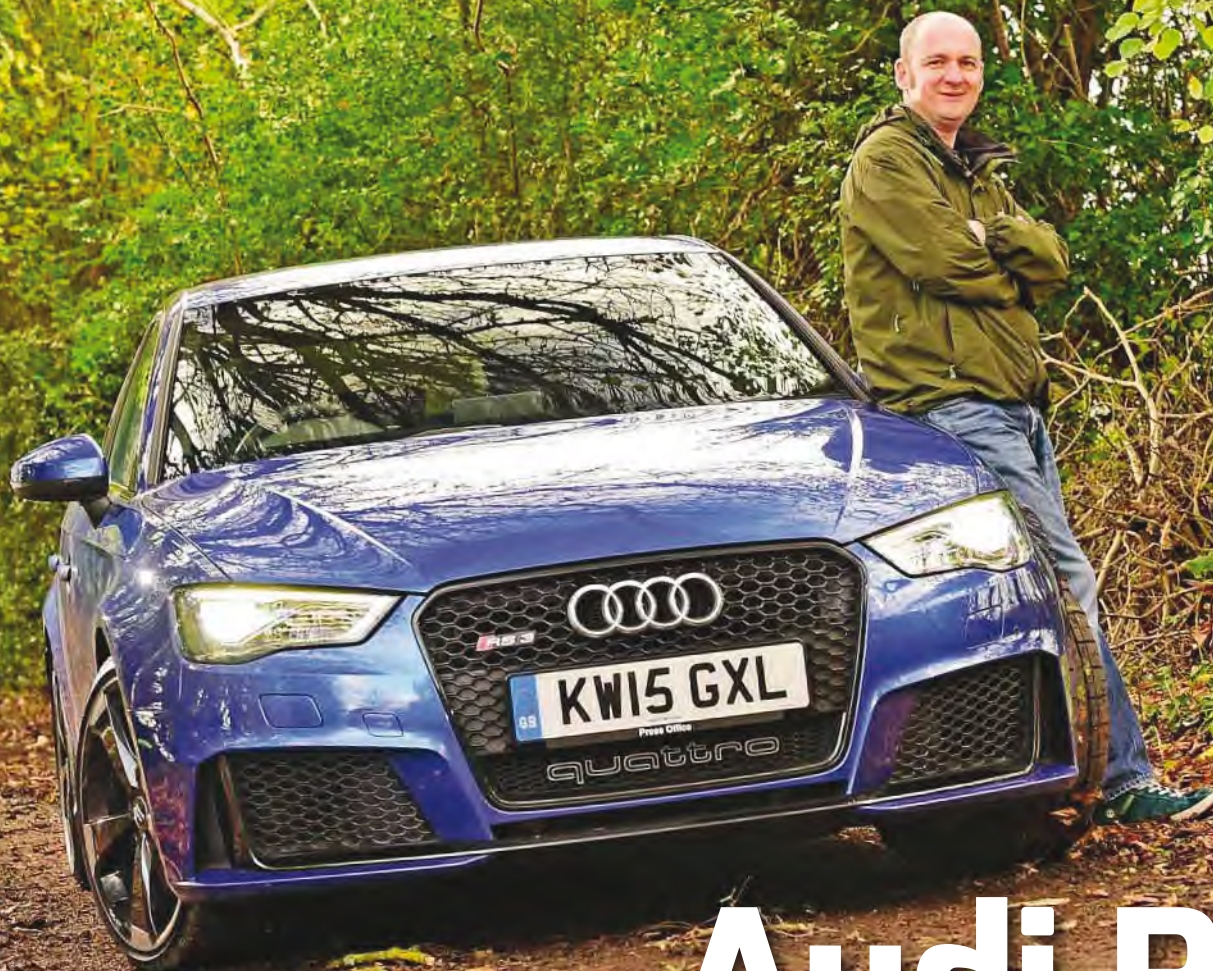
LIKE the Porsche, the M4 GTS has a stripped-out interior, aerodynamic additions and nearly 500bhp. A rear-wheel-drive layout promises lively handling, while the BMW claims 0-62mph in just 4.3 seconds. And with just 30 examples set for the UK, exclusivity is guaranteed.



What do you think?

Tell us about your car

www.autoexpress.co.uk/driverpower



Audi RS3

SECOND REPORT Four-wheel-drive mega hatch is in its element on mucky, leaf-strewn back roads



James Disdale
James_Disdale@dennis.co.uk

AE WELCOME to quattro country. With winter in full swing, the narrow lanes surrounding my Hertfordshire home are covered in fallen leaves, thick mud and deep puddles. These slippery and unpredictable conditions would force most high-performance cars to hibernate until spring, but they're tailor made for our four-wheel-drive Audi RS3.

Under the car's eye-catching Sepang Blue paint is a sophisticated Haldex-controlled all-wheel-drive transmission that can send torque to the axle with most grip in a fraction of a second. As a result, the RS3 can seamlessly adapt to the available grip, keeping you on the straight and narrow where two-wheel-drive rivals start to get unruly.

Even on the dirt-slicked road you see in these pictures, the Audi is able to put down its incredible 361bhp and thumping 465Nm of torque with virtually no fuss. Press the throttle pedal as hard as possible and there's the occasional flash from the ESP light on

the dash, plus a slight pause as the power is shuffled around, but then the Audi simply hunkers down and flies. Switch the ESP to Sport mode and the transmission is primed to react even more quickly, sending up to 100 per cent of the torque to the rear axle for even more agile handling.

This impressive traction inspires confidence, allowing you to press on where other hot hatches need to tread carefully. Better still, the scintillating straight-line performance is matched by arresting braking power. The massive 370mm-diameter cross-drilled front discs are clamped by eight-piston calipers that slow the RS3 with eye-popping force.

Even the wide Pirelli P Zeros cope well, biting hard where you'd expect a little slip. However, the ultra-low-profile rubber is vulnerable to pothole damage, as we found after one crater in the tarmac left us with a puncture that couldn't be fixed (Issue 1,397).

Ultimately, the Audi isn't as fun to drive as some rivals, yet when the weather turns nasty I'm happy to trade thrills for some four-wheel-drive peace of mind. And it's

not just the car's traction that's taking the strain out of the change in seasons.

The standard LED headlamps have really come into their own on gloomy evenings. Even on dipped beam, they cast a brilliant white light that makes it easy to pick out pedestrians in the shadows. Hit full beam on a dark lane and you'd swear the car had been fitted with a powerful rally car lamp pod. Factor in the five-cylinder soundtrack and four-wheel-drive grip, and it's as if you're tackling a Wales Rally GB stage!

So, it sounds like it's all been plain sailing for the Audi, then? Not quite. While waiting in a queue of traffic recently, the stop/start killed the engine as normal, but it refused to fire up again once I lifted off the brake. I tried turning the engine over manually using the key, but still it didn't respond. For about 10 minutes the RS3 sat stranded, before finally bursting into life as if nothing had happened.

The issue hasn't reappeared, but I'll book the car into a dealer for further investigation. Hopefully it won't be serious, as I don't want anything to cool my warm feelings towards this high-performance winter wonder.

"Great traction lets you press on where other cars tread carefully"





Pete Gibson

All-weather star

With its four-wheel-drive grip and powerful brakes, the RS3 is perfect for back lanes in winter



POWERFUL

Twin exhausts hint at immense performance from the 361bhp five-cylinder engine, and we think the Sepang Blue paint looks great, too



CO₂/tax
189g/km
£265 or 32%



Performance
0-62mph/top speed
4.3 seconds/155mph



Running costs
26.8mpg (on test)
£59 fill-up



REPAIR KIT

All you get is a can of sealant in the boot and a compressor, so flat left us stumped

Second opinion

"You'd struggle to call the RS3 economical, but drive with a relatively light right foot and it's possible to return surprising efficiency. On one long motorway run, we recorded a very respectable 38mpg. Of course, you need a lot of willpower to achieve these numbers, because the RS3's five-cylinder engine sounds so good when worked hard. Use the Audi's full performance potential and you'll see fuel economy tumble towards single digits."



Sean Carson Senior road tester

Essentials

Audi RS3 Sportback

On fleet since: August 2015

Price new: £40,795

Engine: 2.5-litre 5cyl turbo, 361bhp

CO₂/tax: 189g/km/£265

Options: Metallic paint (£550), Nappa leather trim (£795), Comfort and Sound package (£1,150), Dynamic package Plus (£2,495), Technology Package (£1,795), Audi Phone Box (£325), black styling pack (£695), privacy glass (£290), red brake calipers (£325)

Insurance*: Group: 40 Quote: £672

Mileage/mpg: 6,891/26.8mpg

Any problems? New tyre (£239), stop/start failure

*Insurance quote from AA (0800 107 0680) for a 42-year-old in Banbury, Oxon, with three points.



WE LIKE Drive Select system lets you adjust various settings, including engine sound, and the warbling five-cylinder works with grippy 4WD to give rally car feel



WE DON'T Stop/start has been hit by a mystery glitch, when the system refused to fire the engine for 10 minutes. We've booked car into a dealer to get it checked out

Auto Express Verdict

WHEN the weather takes a turn for the worse and road conditions are unpredictable, few performance cars inspire confidence like our quattro four-wheel-drive RS3. It's not cheap and the boot is cramped, but its characterful five-cylinder engine and all-weather appeal are hard to resist.





Otis Clay

Otis_Clay@dennis.co.uk

AE THE past few months with our SEAT Leon X-Perience have been fun, but it hasn't been plain sailing all the way. You see, there are so many messages that flash up on the multimedia screen and trip display between the dials that it feels like our SEAT is keeping an eye on what I'm doing, as if I'm swotting up for my driving test again.

The main culprit is the Eco Tips system that appears on the trip display. The Leon has a recommended gear indicator – just like a lot of other new cars – but the Eco Tips give further advice to help you save fuel.

Messages pop up telling you to change up a gear if it thinks you're holding on to the revs. Another tells you not to press the clutch when the engine is above a certain rpm. There are also tips to shut the windows when the air-conditioning is on, and when you're driving at speed to help reduce drag.

But once you're over the initial novelty of seeing the tips pop up, they do seem a bit nannying. That's especially true if you're overtaking, because the car isn't smart enough to know that you need to hold on to the gears, and pops the message up anyway. You can turn the tips off via the settings menu on the main touchscreen, though, once you've scrolled your way through the different sub-menus.

To be fair, this really is nit-picking, as in most other regards, the X-Perience is a joy to drive. It's surprisingly sporty, thanks to its agile chassis and sharp steering, while the 18-inch wheels add a firmness to the ride that makes up for the extra 28mm of ride height it carries over the standard estate.

There isn't much body roll, while the 148bhp 2.0 TDI engine has plenty of punch for hauling my camera gear up and down the UK's motorways. Our car's adaptive cruise control works pretty smoothly compared to rival systems, but I haven't



SEAT Leon X-Perience

SECOND REPORT Crossover estate is so full of advice you'd think our man



“Eco Tips give you advice on how to save fuel, with messages telling you to change up a gear”

used it much. It's only really come in handy at roadworks, because most of the time I prefer to monitor my own speed. Maybe subconsciously those Eco Tips are making me want to take control.

One minor niggle is with boot space. We've mentioned before that the Leon ST isn't the biggest estate around, but it has plenty of useful touches to make up for it. If I'm honest, though, I'd like a bit more



INTERIOR

Rear seats are roomy and can take three adults at a squeeze. Alcantara trim is fitted as standard, and adds to the upmarket appeal



Second opinion

“Crossover estates offer something different to a conventional SUV. They drive like cars, are more efficient, and usually have more space inside, too. The X-Perience isn't the biggest example, but it's still pretty practical, and has an upmarket feel inside.”



Dean Gibson

Deputy road test editor



Practicality

Boot (seats up/down)
587-687/1,470 litres



Running costs

47.2mpg (on test)
£59 fill-up

ence

h was learning to drive



Essentials

SEAT Leon X-Perience SE Technology 2.0 TDI 150

On fleet since: July 2015

Price new: £26,905

Engine: 2.0-litre 4cyl
turbodiesel, 148bhp

CO₂/tax: 125g/km/£110

Options: Metallic paint (£575),
SEAT Sound System (£260), rear side
airbags (£300), adaptive cruise control
with front assist (£515), divider net (£155)

Insurance*: Group: 20 Quote: £543

Mileage/mpg: 22,165/47.2mpg

Any problems? None so far

*Insurance quote from AA (0800 107 0680) for a
42-year-old in Banbury, Oxon, with three points.



WE LIKE Positive gearshift adds to Leon's sporty character, while fast and effective climate control system is a godsend in winter



WE DON'T Although 4WD pegs economy back below 50mpg, it's so unintrusive, you'd barely know the car has all-weather traction



Verdict

THE Leon X-Perience delivers a user-friendly mix of practicality, performance and fun that more than makes up for its few shortcomings. And while the Eco Tips can be irritating, they point you in the right direction when it comes to saving fuel with more economical driving.



Fleetwatch



Our 500X lined up alongside a 500L as well as a standard 500, allowing us to compare the styling of all three models

Fiat 500X

PICTURE editor Dawn Grant was at the centre of an impromptu Fiat car show the other weekend. She'd popped along to her local shops to run an errand, and found a space to park our 500X alongside a 500L people carrier. Then, when she returned, a fellow motorist had parked their Fiat 500 city car next to the other two!

So what did Dawn take from her 500 range showcase? Well, it's clear that the 500L has ended up with the short straw when it comes to design. Integrating the city car's styling cues with a square shape is no easy task, and it really does look like the ugly duckling of the range.

In comparison, our 500X looks pretty smart, and Dawn particularly likes the crossover's rear end styling. The rounded tail is reminiscent of the smaller 500, and the large tail-lights add some style to the rear end. Even better is the fact the 500X's larger dimensions mean it's proving to be practical family transport, with plenty of space inside for both passengers and shopping.



Honda CR-V

OUR practical and comfy CR-V has been piling on the miles with plenty of cross-country journeys. News reporter Lawrence Allan recently took it up to Rockingham Motor Speedway in Northamptonshire for a driving day, and came back relaxed, but not satisfied.

You can tell that the big Honda's been set up with laid-back driving in mind: the soft but flat seats, low-geared steering and long-travel suspension combine with the smooth nine-speed auto box to make long-distance journeys a breeze. Plus, the Garmin-sourced sat-nav is one of the most intuitive around.

Yet Lawrence was happy to leave the CR-V in Rockingham's car park, as he suspects it would have been found wanting on the track. Up the pace on the road and it shows less composure: the steering is slow to react and there's plenty of body roll. On the upside, the ride is comfortable.

While it's a perfectly adequate choice, it's a pity Honda can't match the all-round appeal of class leaders like the Mazda CX-5.

Our fleet INDEX

Audi RS3 Sportback

Issue 1,388

Caterham Seven 270S

Issue 1,397

Citroen C4 Cactus

Issues 1,365, 1,374,
1,385, 1,395

Fiat 500X

Issue 1,393

Ford Mondeo

Issues 1,373, 1,378, 1,389

Honda CR-V

Issue 1,395

Jaguar XE

Issue 1,398

Kia Sorento

Issue 1,395

Lexus NX 300h

Issues 1,377, 1,394

Mazda 2

Iss 1,370, 1,381, 1,386, 1,397

Range Rover Sport

Iss 1,356, 1,363, 1,382, 1,393

Renault Twingo

Issues 1,368, 1,387

SEAT Leon X-Perience

Issue 1,384

Skoda Octavia Scout

Issues 1,382, 1,392

SsangYong Tivoli

New arrival

Suzuki Vitara

Issues 1,379, 1,388

Toyota Verso

Issues 1,381, 1,391



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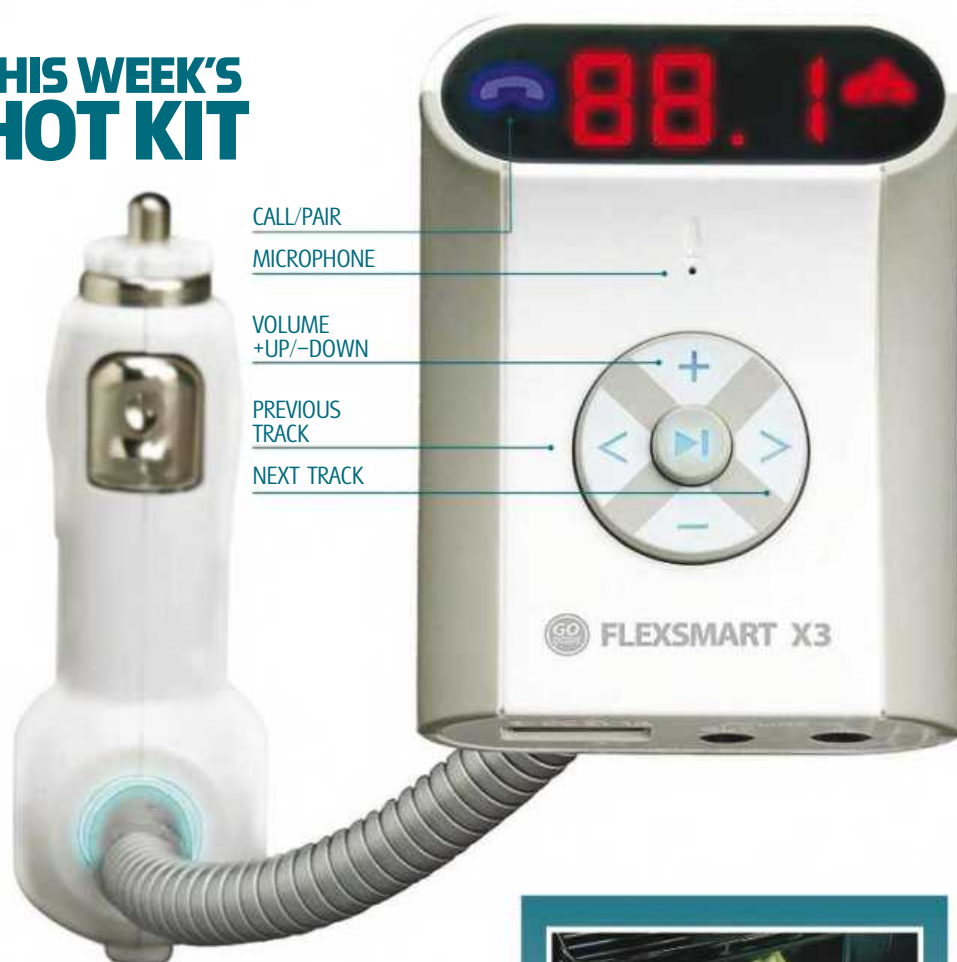
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THIS WEEK'S HOT KIT



TUNE IN WITH BLUETOOTH

FIRST TEST

GOGroove FlexSMART X3 Bluetooth Transmitter

Price: £29.99 Rating: ★★★★★

Contact: +49 30 568 370 0577, accessorypower.co.uk

THERE are a few ways to add Bluetooth to older cars, and the latest is new-to-the-UK Accessory Power's GOGroove FlexSMART X3 transmitter.

You simply plug it into your car's 12V socket, and pair your phone with the Bluetooth signal it provides. You can then make hands-free calls on the move, as a microphone is built in.

Alternatively, use it as an FM transmitter: select an empty frequency on the display on top of the X3, play music from your smartphone and the signal is broadcast via FM to be picked up by your car stereo. The unit also houses music controls for quick track selection.

Sound quality impressed on test, and the X3 performed well. A USB port allows you to charge your phone, and there's an auxiliary input if you don't want to use Bluetooth. The 90-degree 12V plug could be an issue in some cars, but if there's a decent space between your 12V socket and gearstick, this is a great solution.



Pair your phone to make calls and play music; USB lets you charge it as well



**Cat
Dow**

Got a query?

Cat_Dow@dennis.co.uk
@AE_Consumer



Q Pressure washer cleaner

I WAS impressed by the Bosch AQT pressure washer in your recent test (Issue 1,393, above), and want to get one. Do you need any special products or can you use normal car shampoo? **Ali Vanat, E-mail**

A TO get the best out of your pressure washer, you ought to use a specialist cleaner. They blast the caked-on dirt, leaving you to finish up with a mitt. Bilt-Hamber's Surfex HD won our Issue 1,320 test by a clear margin, lifting more dirt than 11 rivals. It costs £14.28 for five litres. Contact www.bilthamber.com for more details.

Q Repairing a head gasket

MY head gasket is damaged. The quote for repair is more than I can afford, so I thought I'd use a sealant, but the mechanic said it would be better to replace it. What else could I do? **Helen Smith, E-mail**

A YOU could try a head gasket sealer, but these are really only a short-term solution, and applying them to the engine head can be quite an involved task in itself. Also, bear in mind that the cost at this stage is significantly lower than if the engine head is damaged further because the gasket isn't repaired properly.

Q What kit for changing tyres?

I'VE read that I ought to be changing summer tyres to winter ones. What equipment will I need if I don't want to pay a garage to do this? **Tom Yeadon, E-mail**

A FIRSTLY, invest in a trolley jack – Clarke's 2.25t Low Entry won our Issue 1,336 test. Then slide in some axle stands, which will keep the vehicle stable. A wrench will loosen and tighten wheel nuts – Halfords' 200139 torque wrench (Issue 1,393) is versatile and will be useful for other jobs on your car. All in, though, this will cost up to £150, so a one-off garage visit is cheaper.



Classic Tool Bag

Price: £260 Contact: www.tbcmainsite.co.uk

THIS leather tool bag is ideal for the tools and spares needed to keep a classic running. You supply the tools, but there is a roll for spanners and sockets, plus a box for small spares like fuses and bulbs. The dry-milled cow hide has 3,500 stitches, with tool loops in the top and a central divider for paperwork.



Richbrook Ford Tailor Made Car Covers

Price: From £99 Contact: www.richbrook.com

FROM Mustangs to Sierras and Consuls to Cougars, this tailor-made protection from Richbrook has it covered. Approved by Ford, the lightweight silver fabric covers reflect UV light, so they're mainly for outdoors, but the material is breathable to release moisture for inside. There's a bonded external coating to bead rain, plus elastic hems and non-scratch securing straps.



F1 Gear Ratio Clock

Price: £129
Contact: www.momentoexclusives.com

GRAB a bit of grand prix history with this gear ratio desk clock. The gears – which have seen race action with the Renault and Lotus teams – have been engraved with a unique identification number, then mirror polished. They're then mounted on a recycled acrylic base with silver-effect hands and F1-style numbers, and it comes with a Lotus F1 certificate of authenticity.



Gtechniq Essential Maintenance Kit

Price: £75 Contact: www.techniq.com

THIS kit has all you need to keep a car sparkling. Supplied in a tough Gtechniq bag, it includes 500ml of Gwash, plus W6 Iron and General Fallout Remover (250ml) for cleaning wheels. With the car clean, you can apply T2 Tyre Dressing (250ml), then add a shine with Quick Detailer (500ml) and use G6 Perfect Glass (500ml). There's also W8 Bug Remover (250ml), plus two microfiber cloths and a drying towel.



20 BIG-BUDGET GIFTS



Push the boat out on a Christmas gift for the car fan you love with our guide

AE Kim Adams

WE'VE already covered the budget end of the market with our 20 great value gifts for petrolheads in Issue 1,397. But what if money is no object this Christmas? Then look no further as we have a score of gifts to inspire you.

We cover all the bases, from model car fans to those who prefer classics and from race enthusiasts to those wanting a motoring theme for their home, office or wardrobe. Plus, we have some great gift ideas from the top marques, as well as presents that are not just good to look at but handy, too. There's something for everyone over the next three pages.

Historic & Classic Car Hirers Guild voucher

Price: From £200
Contact: www.classiccarhire.co.uk

IF you're looking to buy someone a day in a classic car, but don't know what they want to drive or where, this gift voucher from the HCHG – which represents classic hire fleets all over the country – could be perfect. Around £200 should allow a classic fan to pick where and when, plus what car they'd like to get behind the wheel of. There's a huge line-up of models on offer, ranging from the humble Morris Minor Convertible to exotica like Ferraris and Porsches.



Porsche GT3 Cup shelf

Price: £3,000 Contact: shop3.porsche.com

SPOIL a Porsche fan with this rear spoiler from a GT3 Cup racer. They can use it as a shelf to celebrate the marque's World Endurance Championship success this year. Black anodised race-style aluminium brackets allow it to be mounted to a wall, and the wing comes with the original race screws. It also has carbon fibre fins with a black finish, and while it weighs less than 5kg, it can support up to 120kg.

MINI Cooper S Convertible electric ride-on car

Price: £172 Contact: www.amazon.co.uk

IT'S never too early to climb behind the wheel, and this electric ride-on MINI will get the lucky owner off to a great start. Aimed at three to five-year-olds under 35kg, it features an electric motor driven by a 12V, 12Ah battery that gives a 5kmh top speed. Sold by MINI via its Amazon store, it has working lights and the body is made from tough, non-toxic plastic.



Solid Silver Steering Wheel Cufflinks

Price: £240 Contact: www.meandmycar.co.uk

ADD a touch of classic motoring style with these cufflinks that recreate fifties wood-rimmed steering wheels. The solid silver, 2cm-diameter designs are hand-enamelled to give the wood effect, and have drilled spokes. Made in England, they come in a presentation box with a hallmark certificate.



Jaguar E-Type Sculpture

Price: £495

Contact: www.retroclassiccarsparts.com

JUST voted the greatest British car ever, the E-Type not only redefined the sports car, but was also affordable. One of its key features is those sweeping lines captured here in this 1:10-scale Dave Clark Designs sculpture. It manages to capture the grace and pace of the car in simple cut panels. Made to order, so don't hang around.



Ferrari folding bike

Price: £415 Contact: store.ferrari.com

FERRARIS don't get much more exclusive than those with two wheels. This unique 20-inch wheel folding bike claims to use state-of-the-art materials for lightness and top performance. It has an alloy frame and high-end Tektro, Shimano, SRAM and FSB parts. The ultimate park-and-ride commuter to unfold from the boot of your Ferrari FF.



TomTom GO 5100

Price: £259.99

Contact: www.tomtom.com

GET something that's useful as well as stylish by putting the latest TomTom sat-nav at the top of your list. The GO 5100's sleek casing houses a bright and clear display, and not only shows you the way to go, but also warns of delays en route. It links with your PC, too, so journeys planned there can be transferred easily.

Add lifetime worldwide maps, and you have our favourite sat-nav.



BMW Motorsport Tent

Price: £119.06 Contact: www.amazon.co.uk

THIS Motorsport Tent from BMW will put you in pole position at the race track. You don't have to use this neat two-man outfit at a circuit, but it's ideal for a trip to Le Mans or the Nürburgring 24 Hours. With practice it can be put up in a couple of minutes – or about the time it takes to lap Germany's Hockenheim race circuit. It's waterproof thanks to a coating and taped seams, plus there are flaps for ventilation. And the tent packs away into a nylon bag that measures only 70cm long for easy storage.





Original Fiat 500 with lighting

Price: £690.49 Contact: store.fiat.com

WHAT better way to light and decorate a workshop or garage? This metal nose is made from the original Fiat 500 moulds, and you get the front 22cm including a chromed bumper. Plus, there are main beam headlights, direction indicators and a diffused light at the rear. It weighs 8kg and is designed to be wall mounted.



Tamiya Monster Beetle

Price: £129.99 Contact: www.hobbyco.net

CAR fans young and old will love this classic radio control Tamiya re-release. The original launched in 1986, and this updated version retains the rugged 2WD chassis and go-anywhere 130mm tyres. You'll need your own radio and battery, but there's now an electronic speed controller and upgraded driveshafts.

Meistersinger Cream Cracker – MG Watch

Price: £1,406

Contact: www.motoringclassics.co.uk

FEW car-inspired watches capture the spirit of a marque like this Mastersinger Cream Cracker does for MG. The fifties TD grille-style casing with its MG logo on the crown blends perfectly with the colour, hinting at that era's instrument dials. The watch is named after one of the best-known works MGs, and under the Safety Fast slogan is a Swiss movement and stainless steel casing. Similar designs are available with matching Cordovan horse leather straps celebrating MG's Abingdon factory in Oxon and founder Cecil Kimber.



Storm Kids Racing Car Bed

Price: £269.90 Contact: www.toyzworld.co.uk

THIS sports car bed has wheels and engine sounds to make a young motoring fan's dreams come true. There are also working headlights, plus you can get a personalised number plate. The blow-moulded rigid plastic body is easy to assemble and the mattress is included. It measures 160x70cm and is for two to seven-year-olds weighing under 40kg.



Speed 998 Office Racing Chair

Price: £779.99

Contact: shop.classicheroes.co.uk

ONE for fast workers. This Promech Racing-designed office chair is a competition seat bolted to castors with hi-tech ergonomics. It mixes leather and Alcantara, and has a recline/lock mechanism and adjustable lumbar support. The arms are inspired by alloy wheels, plus there are racing vents.

Tibaldi for Bentley GT Series Pen

Price: £400

Contact: shop.bentleymotors.com

SIGN your name in style with a Bentley rollerball pen. Offered in Beluga black, Silver, Silver Lake Blue and St James Red, it has distinctive knurling, with the cap reflecting the engine cam covers. A fountain pen is £675.



Halfords Advanced Professional 200 Piece Socket and Ratchet Spanner Set

Price: £150 Contact: www.halfords.com

THE long name reflects the true scale of this comprehensive DIY car kit. It includes 1/4, 3/8 and half-inch drive wrenches with metric, imperial and deep sockets to match. There are extension bars, adaptors to mix and match drives, plus metric ratchet spanners. Add hex, Torx and screwdriver bits, and it's got the lot.



Lifestatix Lewis Hamilton's F1 W06 Hybrid

Price: \$99 (£66 approx)

Contact: www.lifestatix.com

CELEBRATE Lewis Hamilton's third F1 title with these vinyl wall graphics. Officially licensed by the MercedesAMG team, the hi-res plastic laminates can be stuck to a wall and removed over and over again. They're just under 40 inches wide and arrive in a tube with mounting instructions. A lifesize version of Lewis is the same price. They're made in LA, so order quickly for Christmas delivery.





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NEW PRODUCT

No Water Needed

Best price: £8.99 (750ml)

Contact: 0161 706 0141, nowaterneeded.co.uk

NEW waterless wash is made without carnauba wax, and has a high-gloss polymer to imitate the shine carnauba-based washes achieve. It means it's great on glass, and it easily cleaned the glass boot door on our Renault Twingo test car.

Shifting grime elsewhere on the body took more effort, but once buffed it left a much smoother finish than the Triplewax. The maker recommends you spray on to a cloth, presumably to reduce waste, but it meant we needed more wipes than with the other products to get a clean finish.

Still, this looks good value, as two washable microfibre cloths are supplied, for cleaning and buffing. Blue and green colours help you tell them apart.

Rating: ★★★★★



Wipe away grime with a winning waterless wash



WATERLESS washes are a great way to keep your car clean in poor winter weather when you are confined to the garage.

New to this growing market is No Water Needed, so we put it up against the Auto Express Product Awards 2015 winner in this class, Meguiar's Wash and Wax Anywhere, plus Triplewax's new Shake & Shine – the follow-up to the brand's commended Waterless Wash & Shine.

We tested our trio on larger panels and more intricate areas, and as No Water Needed claims to tackle glass well, we also tried them here. Nozzle quality and spray patterns were rated, as were prices, taken from a range of sources as we went to press.

Wash and Wax Anywhere is still our pick, while Shake & Shine would have fared better with a higher-quality nozzle. Although No Water Needed trumped both on glass, it needed more effort to shift tough grime on bodywork.

"We tested large panels and more intricate areas, plus rated nozzle quality"

ULTIMATE CHAMP

Meguiar's Wash and Wax Anywhere

Best price: £14.95 (768ml)

Contact: www.meguiars.co.uk

THIS pleasantly scented wash misted on to the panels and wiped off easily. Although it needed more effort to get a good finish on glass, it buffed to a shine.

It doesn't come with any cloths, and you'd get through about six cloths to clean one mildly dirty car. Plus, it's pricey compared to rivals, but it left the best finish by quite some distance.

Rating: ★★★★★



UPDATED FORMULA

Triplewax Shake & Shine

Best price: £11.95 (one litre)

Contact: 0161 764 5981, triplewax.co.uk

ITS predecessor was top value, and while new Shake & Shine comes in the same one-litre volume, it disappointed. The nozzle quality is poor, so some liquid went on the cloth – which isn't provided – but the rest dribbled down our hand.

Once on, it cleaned with fewer wipes than No Water Needed, yet struggled to remove tougher dirt. The shine matched rivals', but it took some effort to achieve.

Rating: ★★★★★



books, apps & games



Car Registration Guide

Peter Robson (Newby Books, www.newbybooks.co.uk)

Price: £4.95 (hardback) Rating: ★★★★★

DECIPHER number plates in detail with the help of this pocket guide. From military to ambassadorial cars in Italy to Iceland, it covers anything you could possibly want to know about vehicle licence plates over the course of 80 pages. There's even a section for number plate spotters to note down their greatest finds. A niche purchase, but a very well constructed book.



Aussie Grit

Mark Webber (Macmillan, www.macmillan.com)

Price: £6.99 (hardback) Rating: ★★★★★

THIS is the hotly anticipated autobiography of veteran Formula One driver Mark Webber. Brutally honest, the Aussie gives readers a rare glimpse into the select circles of top-tier motor racing. From his home in Queanbeyan, New South Wales, to circuits like Monaco, and into the cockpit of Porsche's latest Le Mans 24 Hours campaign, it's a thrilling read for anyone into wheel-to-wheel racing.



Forza 6

Available for: Xbox One

Price: £37.68 Rating: ★★★★★

ARGUABLY the best racing game on next-generation consoles right now. Forza 6 has twice as many cars as Forza 5, plus dynamic weather, loads of tracks and a fun single-player mode. The best bit? Driving the late Ayrton Senna's McLaren MP4/4 round Spa.



App of the week



Car Logo Quiz

Available for: Android

Price: Free Rating: ★★★★★

TEST your car geek knowledge with this Car Logo Quiz app. You have to guess the makes behind a range of increasingly obscure logos with only a few hints. It's addictive fun, but a few tweaks to the interface, plus availability on iOS, would have helped it score higher.





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DMS SL65 BLACK SERIES (EVO OCTOBER '10) "IT FEELS LIKE THE LOVE CHILD OF AN SL65 AND A PORSCHE GT2"

DMS 135i (BMW CAR MAY '09) "THE STANDARD CAR IS GREAT BUT DMS HAVE SOMEHOW MANAGED TO TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL"

DMS 997 TURBO 3.6 (EVO SEPTEMBER '08) "IT'S EPIC, HILARIOUS AND ADDICTIVE IN EVERY GEAR, YET DOCILE WHEN CRUISING"

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C400 » 400 BHP
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997 CARRERA GTS » 435 BHP
997 GT3 UP » 436 BHP
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**Auto
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YOUR VIEWS ON YOUR CARS



BMW X1 Mk1

YOU TELL US... Crossover is reliable, but has poor ride and kit

**100th
PLACE**

2015 Results X1 Factfile

Years: 2009 to 2015 **CO₂:** 176g/km
Fuel economy: 37mpg (xDrive20i SE 5dr)
Best options: Parking sensors, sat-nav, USB and Bluetooth connection, heated seats, rain sensor
Prices: From £9,450

OVERALL SCORE Bars show where model finished out of 200 cars in our 2015 survey. The lower the rating the better
87.47%

	200	150	100	50	1
RELIABILITY					62
BUILD QUALITY					61
RUNNING COSTS					75
PERFORMANCE					75
ROAD HANDLING					61
RIDE QUALITY					162
EASE OF DRIVING					180
SEAT COMFORT					135
PRACTICALITY					103
IN-CAR TECH					132

GOOD

"THE all-wheel-drive system is a nice feature to have when the weather turns bad."
"Very comfortable; my daily commute is a breeze, even in heavy traffic."
"I really like the high driving position. It adds another element of safety to the car."

"A great all-rounder; does everything from holiday drives to a quick nip on B-roads so well."

"The paddle-shift gearbox is surprisingly fun to use."

"Fuel economy is good for such a big car. I get around 45mpg."

NOT SO GOOD

"THE suspension feels harsh compared to other SUVs."

"There is a rattle in the rear every time I go over a bump. I've booked the car into a dealer to sort this out."

"Damage can be expensive to repair. A small pothole caused me to spend £1,400 on non-essential repairs to my car."

"Some of the internal fittings don't match BMW's previous quality standards."

"A noisy car when driving on the motorway."

"It could come with more equipment and features as standard."



How do you rate your car?
Tell us what you think
www.autoexpress.co.uk/driverpower



Martin Saarinen

Got any car queries?

Martin_Saarinen@dennis.co.uk
@AE_Consumer

Q Warranty query on C4

MY Citroen C4 needed a new thermostat housing. I went to an independent garage, but later realised the part was covered under warranty. Citroen has paid for the parts, but won't pay for the labour. Is this fair?
D Appadurai, E-mail

A **WARRANTY** work should be done at an official dealer to avoid paying unnecessarily. Citroen's acted fairly by paying for parts, but there's no reason it should cover the independent's labour – it would essentially be paying its wages.

Q Why is my up! damp?

I RECENTLY purchased a 2012 Volkswagen up! and have been getting heavy dampness on the inside of the front windscreen. Do you have any ideas what causes this?
Justin Costello, E-mail

A **THE** fault most probably lies in your air-con not having enough refrigerant to lubricate the system. This causes a blockage which results in the dampness. It may be time to visit your local VW dealer to clean the system. This should be done on a yearly basis.

Q Driver awareness courses

MY son, who lives in Glasgow, was caught speeding in Leeds, where police offered him a speed awareness course instead of a fine. Are these courses on offer in Scotland?
Aidan Trott, E-mail

A **POLICE** Scotland doesn't run or offer driver awareness courses. However, Scottish drivers caught speeding in the rest of the UK can be offered a speed awareness course, but they will have to travel to an approved training centre to take it.

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NEED TO KNOW

One of the biggest bugbears we had with the DS 3 we ran on our fleet was how poor the built-in sat-nav was.

BUYER'S GUIDE: Citroen DS3

FROM £6,000 Premium supermini stands out as a fine second-hand buy

AE Richard Dredge

WHEN MINI and Fiat proved premium small cars could be big business, Citroen realised there was an opportunity to introduce a posh supermini of its own. While the French brand was renowned for producing affordable cars, they were rarely seen as aspirational – it aimed to change that by launching the DS3 in 2010.

The move proved a masterstroke: the car was a big sales success, and DS went on to become a sub-brand in its own right, dropping the Citroen reference. After five years, the stylish supermini, now badged DS 3 continues to be popular, even though it has had little development – apart from refreshed engines – as it hasn't needed it.

History

THE DS3 arrived in spring 2010, with 1.4 or 1.6-litre petrol engines, the latter in 120bhp VTi or turbocharged 150bhp THP forms. There was also a 1.6 HDi diesel, with 89bhp or 109bhp. The hot 207bhp DS3 Racing of October 2010 was restricted

to just 200 right-hand-drive examples, while in spring 2012 a new flagship Ultra Prestige model was launched.

A range refresh in November saw the HDi diesels rebranded e-HDi. CO₂ emissions of the 1.6-litre 90 version fell to 95g/km, and the 110 model was cut to 99g/km of CO₂.

In spring 2013 a DS3 Cabrio arrived, with a peel-back fabric roof, then in summer 2014, 99bhp and 119bhp versions of the 1.6-litre HDi were introduced, along with an 82bhp 1.2-litre petrol engine.

Which one?

THE petrol engines, developed with BMW, are sweet and frugal, but the 1.6 HDi is the star. It's smooth, torquey and economical, and even the 90bhp edition is muscular.

Trim levels are (in ascending order) DSign, DStyle, DSport and DSport Plus. Entry-level models come with powered windows, cruise control and electrically adjustable door mirrors, but DStyle adds air-con, privacy glass and alloy wheels. The top-of-the-range DSport features dual-zone

climate control, Bluetooth, 17-inch alloy wheels and some sporty trim.

There's a vast array of personalisation options on the DS3, so pin down the exact spec you want before you buy it.

Alternatives

A MINI is the obvious alternative, but prices are higher, and the baby Brit isn't as practical or comfortable. It's better built, though, and there's more choice.

Another key rival is the Fiat 500 – like the Citroen and MINI, it comes in closed or open-top forms. It's smaller and more cramped inside, with a tighter boot, but is fun to drive and generally reliable, plus there are some exciting Abarth editions.

If you're looking for value and fun, you can't really beat the Ford Fiesta; there are masses to choose from and prices are very

keen, although given how common it is, you won't stand out from the crowd in one.

Verdict

IT may be five years old, but the DS3 still looks as fresh as ever. And while it's starting to drop down the rankings in our Driver Power satisfaction survey (right), it's proving cheap to run and fun to drive.

Reliability and build quality issues are becoming more common, but the DS3 is largely proving dependable. We ran a 1.6 THP 150 model on our fleet for a year and 14,000 miles, and loved it. During that time, the car contested three group tests and won each one.

We wrote: "The DS3 really comes into its own on twisty roads, where the lively acceleration, responsive steering and agile handling make it hard to beat."

"Although it's five years old, the DS3 still looks fresh, and is proving cheap to run and fun to drive"



NEED TO KNOW

Some early examples have wheelarch liners which can sag or pop out; a design tweak means newer cars are okay.

NEED TO KNOW

Some THP engines have suffered from water pump and turbo failures, plus hesitation and misfiring.

Thanks to Imperial Car Supermarkets in Hampshire for the loan of the DS3 pictured.

Contact 023 8098 6917

imperialcarsupermarkets.co.uk

Front windows

THE front side windows are bordered with black vinyl, which can bubble then peel away. Replacing the vinyl completely is the only effective fix.



Tom Wood

Bluetooth

SOME phones struggle to pair via Bluetooth. The system sometimes just needs an update, but it may be that your device is incompatible; check before buying.



Wheels

ALLOY wheels can corrode around their rims and bolt holes. Road salt and aggressive cleaning chemicals can accelerate this.



Washer jets

SOME DS3 owners have had problems with the windscreen washer jets failing in sub-zero temperatures. This is caused by the fuse blowing.



Performance

0-60mph/top speed
11.3 seconds/112mph



Running costs

70-78mpg (1.6 HDi 90)
£53 fill-up



CO₂/tax

91-107g/km
£0-£20



www.autoexpress.co.uk/driverpower

OUR VIEW

THE DS3 debuted in 36th place in our Driver Power survey in 2013, then ranked 37th in the 2014 poll. But a drop to 67th this year is disappointing. It plummeted from 88th to 150th for build quality, and came a lowly 173rd for practicality, too. Results for running costs (28th), handling (43rd) and performance (52nd) are much better.

YOUR VIEW

ANTHONY French from Chester owns a DS3 1.6 HDi 110. He told Auto Express: "I love the torquey engine, the steering and the car's agility, and it looks classy, too. Fuel economy is excellent and reliability has also been good, but I wish the Bluetooth worked better. Sometimes it connects and sometimes it doesn't."



Interior

THE DS3's cabin generally feels well made and it looks good, too, although rear seat access is hampered by the three-door layout. All the seats are comfy, but tall people will find rear legroom tight. Still, boot space is good – the 285-litre load bay expands to 980 litres with the seats folded.

Contacts

Official
www.citroen.co.uk

Forums
www.ds3club.co.uk
<http://ds3club.eu>
www.ds3forum.co.uk

How much?

	14 2014	13 2013	12 2012	11 2011	10 2010
Model					
1.2 DSign	£7,850	£6,995	N/A	N/A	N/A
1.4 DSign	N/A	N/A	£6,295	£5,675	£5,125
1.6 VTi DStyle	£9,950	£8,850	£7,875	£6,995	£6,295
1.6 THP DSport	£11,150	£9,950	£8,795	£7,695	£6,950
1.6 HDi 90 DStyle	£9,350	£8,350	£7,995	£6,895	£6,250
1.6 HDi 110 DSport	£11,250	£9,995	£9,195	£8,275	£7,450
1.6 HDi 110 Ultra Prestige	£12,950	£11,550	£10,195	N/A	N/A

ANY DS3 below £5,500 will be a category D write-off or will have covered at least 120,000 miles. However, for just £6,000, you can buy an early car with no more than 60,000 miles. A 2013 (63-reg) 1.6 e-HDi that's done 50,000 miles or a 12-plate 1.6 VTi with 30,000 miles – both in DStyle Plus trim – will cost £8,000.

There's an even split between petrols and diesels, but automatics are unusual. They're offered only with the 1.6-litre petrol engine, and start at £7,000 for a 45,000-mile 2010 DStyle. Cabrios tend to cost from £9,000.

Running costs

		Fuel economy	CO ₂ emissions	Annual road tax
Model				
1.2 82	10-11	62mpg	104-107g/km	£20
1.2 110	19	61mpg	104g/km	£20
1.4 VTi	13	48mpg	134-136g/km	£130
1.6 VTi	16-19	47mpg	132-138g/km	£130
1.6 THP	22-27	42-48mpg	129-155g/km	£120-£180
1.6 HDi 90	15-18	70-78mpg	91-107g/km	£0-£20
1.6 HDi 110	16-19	67mpg	109-118g/km	£20-£30

ALL DS3s feature variable servicing, allowing up to 12,500 miles between checks for diesel-powered cars, and 20,000 miles for petrol versions. Maintenance is required every two years for all models registered up to July 2012; later cars cut this to every 12 months.

Services alternate between minor and major, priced at £150 and £250 respectively. Once a DS3 is three years old, it's eligible for cut-price services at £115 and £195.

Diesel-powered models require a replacement cambelt every 120,000 miles or 10 years for £345. All DS3s need fresh brake fluid every two years (£49), and fresh coolant every four years, with the cost included in the service.

Partwatch

	Dealer price	Independent price
Part		
Front brake pads (axle set)	£47.04	£31.14
Front brake discs (pair)	£193.34	£47.40
Door mirror glass (electric)	£41.42*	£14.02
Front wiper set	£37.44	£27

Prices for a 2012 1.6 HDi 110. Dealer figures supplied by Citroen Redditch, Worcs (redditch.citroen.co.uk). Independent prices from Euro Car Parts (www.eurocarparts.com). *For left-hand side mirror glass; right-hand side costs £34.33.

Recalls

THE DS3 has been recalled a disappointing 18 times: four times in 2010, four in 2011, six in 2012, once in 2013 and three more times in 2014. Potential problems ranged from faulty airbags and fuel leaks to the engine cutting out – five recalls covered this. Further recalls involved bonnet-latching glitches, broken driveshafts, suspension failures, problems with detaching rear screens, plus trouble with the anti-lock brakes and ESP.

Car hunter

£8,000 for a tall auto hatch, but which one?

Dear Lawrence, I'm in my seventies and am after a tall auto hatchback with easy access and good visibility. What would you recommend for £8,000?

Geoff Edwards, Eastbourne, East Sussex

Contact: Lawrence_Allan@dennis.co.uk



CARS

THE COMFORTABLE CHOICE



Vauxhall Meriva

FOR: Novel doors, comfort, build quality
AGAINST: Road noise, spec on base models

THE original Meriva lacked sparkle, but Vauxhall changed that with the latest model. Its rear-hinged back doors provide easy access for all passengers.

The rest of the car is a bit more conventional, and inside the Meriva is well built and has lots of space. It drives like an Astra, although the ride is firm and the Ford B-MAX is more fun. Plus, you'll have to step up from a base Expression to get air-con. A 27,000-mile 13-plate 1.7 diesel SE auto is yours for £7,499.

THE PRACTICAL CHOICE



Citroen C3 Picasso

FOR: Funky looks, practical cabin, refined
AGAINST: Body roll, driving position

CITROEN'S C3 Picasso is more conventional than rivals, although it still looks bold and is really practical. The doors open wide, and once you're inside, visibility is excellent, plus the layout is quirky but easy to use.

The soft suspension is comfortable, but it can get bouncy and the vague steering, sluggish auto and awkward driving position don't encourage fun. Still, it scores on space and kit. We found a 2012 1.6-litre petrol VTR+ auto with 11,000 miles for £7,199.

THE CLEVER CHOICE



Ford B-MAX

FOR: Pillarless sliding rear doors, drive
AGAINST: Price, seats not that versatile

LIKE the Meriva, the Ford B-MAX stands out with its doors. The rear doors slide, and if you open the fronts, too, you'll find no B-pillar, for really easy access. But the dash design takes a bit of getting used to.

Fiesta underpinnings mean it's great to drive, with a mix of comfort, agility and slick controls. Yet you can only get the PowerShift auto with a thirsty 1.6-litre petrol engine. Our search unearthed a 2012 Zetec PowerShift with 38,000 miles for £7,650.

INTERIOR



THE Meriva's cabin is typical Vauxhall, with upmarket materials but a very button-heavy layout. Still, the seats can slide, fold and push inwards, while there's loads of clever storage space and the boot is generous.



INSIDE, the C3 Picasso is a breath of fresh air with its minimalist layout, decent quality and plenty of space. It has a big boot as well. A poorly positioned driver's seat and offset pedals let the side down, though.



THOSE doors set the B-MAX apart, but it trails its rivals here on outright space. There's enough room for four adults, though, plus plenty of equipment, even if there are too many buttons on the dash, as with the Meriva.

RELIABILITY



EVEN considering its age, the Meriva put in a poor showing in our Driver Power 2015 satisfaction survey, languishing in 186th place. Owners praised practicality, but criticised its road manners and performance.



A RANKING of 108th overall in Driver Power 2015 isn't much to shout about, but the Citroen was the best-performing car out of this trio. Even so, handling and build quality came in for specific criticism.



THE B-MAX finished a less-than-impressive 128th in our latest satisfaction survey, with reliability and build quality singled out by owners as below par. It fared better for handling and comfort, though.

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Style over substance?

Head-turning turbo hatchbacks offer something different second-hand, and we take our pick

Hyundai is well built and offers plenty of kit



Hyundai Veloster

40.9mpg (official)
£55 fill-up



Veloster Turbo SE

Years: 2012 to 2014 **Engine:** 1.6-litre 4cyl, 184bhp

Insurance group: 20 **Econ/CO₂:** 41mpg/157g/km

Why? Quirky Veloster coupé has a 2+1 door layout for extra practicality, and is the better driver's car here.

Prices from: £10,000

HYUNDAI thought the Veloster was the perfect compromise, as the curvy coupé shape hid a practical hatchback rear end, plus there was a single rear passenger door. This opened on to the pavement in the UK, and gave the car better back seat access than similar rivals – but the company still struggled to shift the Veloster in this country, and it was axed in 2014.

Still, look past the unusual design, and there's a lot to like. It's similar to the i30 Turbo inside, which means lots of kit and decent quality, but few sporty touches. Yet it's roomier than the Nissan Juke and has a bigger boot.

On the road, the 1.6-litre turbo petrol engine is smooth and has enough poke, but the noise is bland. Up the pace, and the Hyundai is more direct, grippy and rolls less than the Juke. It also rides better and is more refined overall.

The Veloster didn't feature in our Driver Power 2015 satisfaction survey, but the i30 finished an average 102nd. The coupé benefits from the peace of mind of Hyundai's five-year warranty.



Veloster's raked body provides a surprising amount of space inside, and drive is refined

1 Hyundai Veloster



THE Veloster isn't perfect and could be more exciting, but it's an easy car to live with. What it lacks in character it makes up for with space, refinement, a more rounded drive and that warranty.



Juke Nismo looks and feels special inside



Nissan Juke

40.9mpg (official)
£51 fill-up



Juke's 1.6-litre turbo is strong, but there's too much body roll. Rear is pretty cramped, too

2 Nissan Juke Nismo



WHILE the Juke is sportier and has more character than its rival, this isn't enough to make it a good car. Mediocre dynamics, high used prices and a lack of space cancel out its punchy turbo engine.

Juke Nismo

Years: 2013 to date **Engine:** 1.6-litre 4cyl, 197bhp

Insurance group: 20 **Econ/CO₂:** 41mpg/159g/km

Why? Racy styling additions give Juke a striking look, plus it has a sporty chassis and punchy turbo engine.

Prices from: £12,995

NISSAN entered a new niche when it let Nismo engineers tune the popular Juke crossover.

Like the Veloster, the Juke Nismo is certainly an acquired taste, but there are some suitably sporty exterior additions. Add a cabin with plenty of trim upgrades, and the car feels more special than the Hyundai. The trouble is, it's impractical for a car of this size, with limited rear legroom and a tiny 251-litre boot.

The Juke Nismo has a similar 1.6-litre turbo to the Veloster, but delivers more power. This means it's more characterful from behind the wheel, with a better noise and punchier top end.

It's a mixed bag in terms of handling on the road, however. Although it provides decent grip and positive steering, there's too much body roll, thanks to its high centre of gravity and an overly firm ride. It does have more of a sense of occasion, though.

The standard Juke finished a disappointing 138th place in Driver Power 2015, and is more expensive on the second-hand market, too.



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1. Official EU MPG test figure shown as a guide for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results. 2. Congestion Charge application required, subject to administrative fee. 3. The Alternatives PCP finance plan shown above is only available to customers resident in the UK, aged 18 and over, subject to status only through **Shogun Finance Ltd T/A Finance Mitsubishi, 116 Cockfosters Rd, Barnet, EN4 0DY**. Finance Mitsubishi is part of Lloyds Banking Group. Alternatives figures are based upon an annual mileage of 10,000, excess mileage will be chargeable. The Guaranteed Future Value (GFV) is subject to the vehicle being returned on time, in good condition (fair wear and tear accepted), within the permitted maximum mileage and all the required payments having been made. Final payments (GFV) and monthly repayments may vary dependent upon date of registration and mileage, examples are a guide. Full written quotations are available upon request. Offer is only applicable in the UK (excludes Channel Isles & I.O.M) and may be withdrawn at any time. Finance offer available at participating dealers between 29th September to 29th December 2015.



F1 drops budget engine plans

■ Ecclestone-backed idea rejected ■ New proposals to reduce costs



Stephen Errity

Stephen_Errity@dennis.co.uk

AE PLANS for a more affordable Formula One engine to be offered alongside the current complicated and expensive 1.6-litre turbocharged hybrids have been rejected by the F1 Commission.

The proposal, which had the backing of both F1 supremo Bernie Ecclestone and FIA president Jean Todt, would have seen a third party produce a 2.2-litre twin-turbo V6 with a basic kinetic energy recovery system.

The FIA got as far as calling for tenders from engineering companies interested in developing the so-called 'client engine'.

It would have provided approximately the same performance as the current 1.6-litre hybrids from Mercedes, Renault and Honda, but have been made available to customer teams for around half the cost.

Ferrari had previously vetoed a plan to reduce the cost of supplying the current design of engines to customer squads.

Team principal Maurizio Arrivabene said at the time: "We exerted our veto in compliance with our commercial right to

do business as a powertrain manufacturer. It's not a position against the other teams, it's defending a commercial principle."

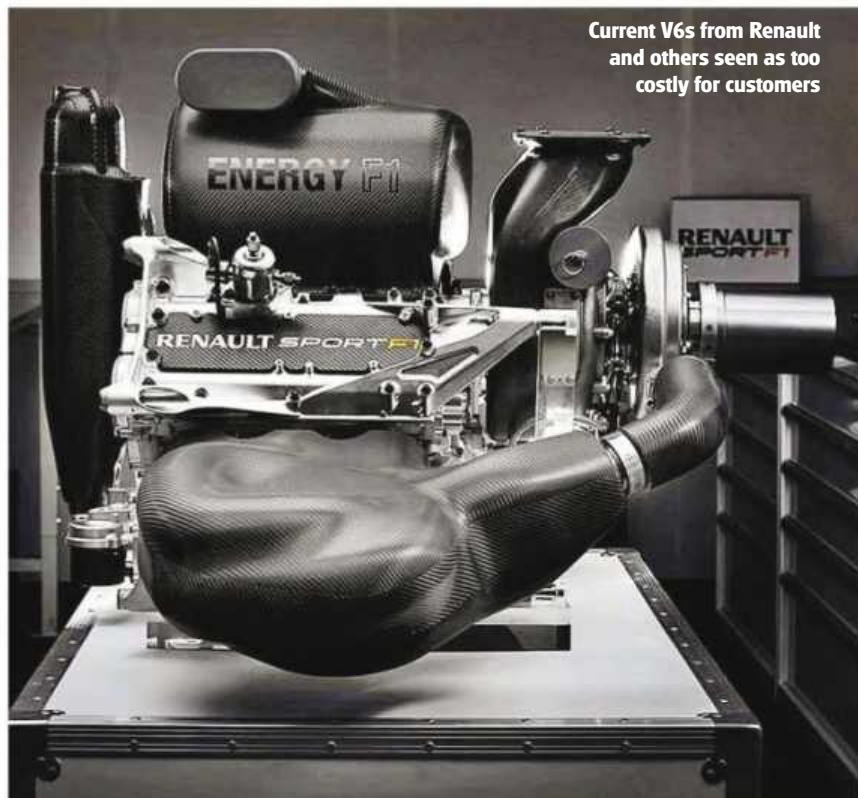
Formula One's engine manufacturers are now set to present a new proposal early next month, which will focus on four main areas: guaranteeing the supply of engines to all teams, lowering the cost of an engine supply, simplifying their specification and improving the cars' exhaust note on track.

The latter has come in for heavy criticism since the new rules were introduced at the start of 2014, while the extreme complexity of the 1.6-litre hybrids means new entrants (such as Honda this season) find it almost impossible to get on terms with Mercedes.

Elsewhere, Williams has announced the signing of the 17-year-old Canadian Lance Stroll to its young driver programme.

Stroll, who was previously attached to Ferrari, will undertake a similar development path to Valtteri Bottas, who joined Williams in 2011 and graduated to racing in 2013.

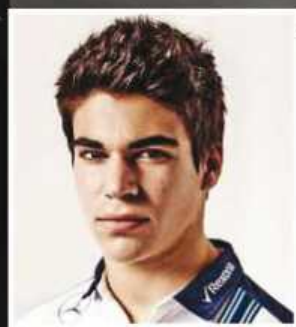
Deputy team principal Claire Williams said: "We have a track record of success in this area, having supported Valtteri to become one of the biggest talents in F1."



Current V6s from Renault and others seen as too costly for customers



Budget engine would have appealed to Red Bull after its troubles with Renault



Ferrari's Arrivabene (above) vetoed a reduction of engine costs; Williams has signed Stroll (left)

British racers clinch Ford GT seats

TOP British sportscar drivers Richard Westbrook and Andy Priaulx will form part of the Ford GT works racing effort on both sides of the Atlantic next season.

Westbrook joins Ryan Briscoe and former BMW factory stars Dirk Mueller and Joey Hand in contesting the full IMSA series schedule, which includes the Daytona 24-hour and Sebring 12-hour races.

Priaulx, meanwhile, is the first driver to be confirmed for the World Endurance Championship arm of the programme, which will see Ford take on Ferrari, Aston Martin and Corvette at Le Mans in June.

The Ford switch marks the end of a 12-year relationship with BMW for the Guernseyman, during which he became World Touring Car Champion three times.



Brits Andy Priaulx (right, top) and Richard Westbrook (bottom) will drive EcoBoost-powered Ford GT (above) in US and Europe



Self-driving race cars on the way

SELF-driving racing cars without drivers are set to become a reality next year.

Roborace, a new series that'll support Formula E, will allow firms developing artificial intelligence software to pit their technology against each other in identical electrically powered autonomous race cars.

Starting with Formula E's third season in autumn 2016, the Roborace events will take place on the same city street circuits, two hours before the main race.



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AE HAD a good and productive day at 'the office' last week – driving and judging some of the World Car Awards nominees for 2016 in and around Los Angeles.

A handful of the contenders at this Californian Test Fest were from outside the USA. But most were from within. And cars from GM – still America's number one – dominated. How come? Because the cold, harsh truth is that in 2015/16, The General is putting on sale across the world far more new models than comparatively sleepy US rivals, Ford and Chrysler.

For being so active, GM deserves much praise. But while America's biggest vehicle manufacturing operation obviously doesn't have issues designing and churning out new product, it is creating problems for itself by making its cars too, er, American.

I can explain. Sitting alongside GM's 'brawn in the USA' beasts at the LA Test Fest were, for example, the Volvo XC90 plus all-new versions of the Mazda MX-5 and Toyota Prius. This trio showed no visual evidence of their Swedish or Japanese origins. Instead, they genuinely looked like cars for the world – or, in the case of the deliciously bonkers Prius, a car for (and from) another planet.

Conversely, the GM/Cadillac/Chevrolet rivals they're competing with for World Car honours not only looked unmistakably American, but felt, smelt and shouted American, too. This might work for consumers in the US. But on a global scale, they don't have the same resonance.

In the past, when the world was a smaller place, major selling points for Caddys and Chevys were that they were big/bold, loud/proud hunks of Detroit iron. They looked, felt, drove, sounded and screamed USA, land of the free, living the American dream and all that. But that was then. And this is now. Tastes have changed. Less is very often more. Increasingly sophisticated and well travelled consumers from all corners of the globe – The Americas included – are rapidly concluding that American cars aren't as desirable as they used to be.

And they're not priced as well as they used to be, either. Together, the brilliant XC90 plus the scintillatingly good MX-5 at the World Car Test Fest could be bought for less money than one merely adequate Cadillac CTS-V. Such price-related madness is almost as bonkers as the insane exterior appearance of the latest Toyota Prius.



Mike Rutherford

Motoring's most outspoken and opinionated columnist sounds off

W Increasingly, well travelled consumers are concluding that American cars aren't as desirable as they used to be

**next
week**

**MASSIVE
DOUBLE ISSUE**



**2015 REVIEW
OF THE YEAR**

Everything that mattered over the past 12 months in news, tests, sport, products...

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DRIVEN



308 R HYbrid

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Wednesday 9 December

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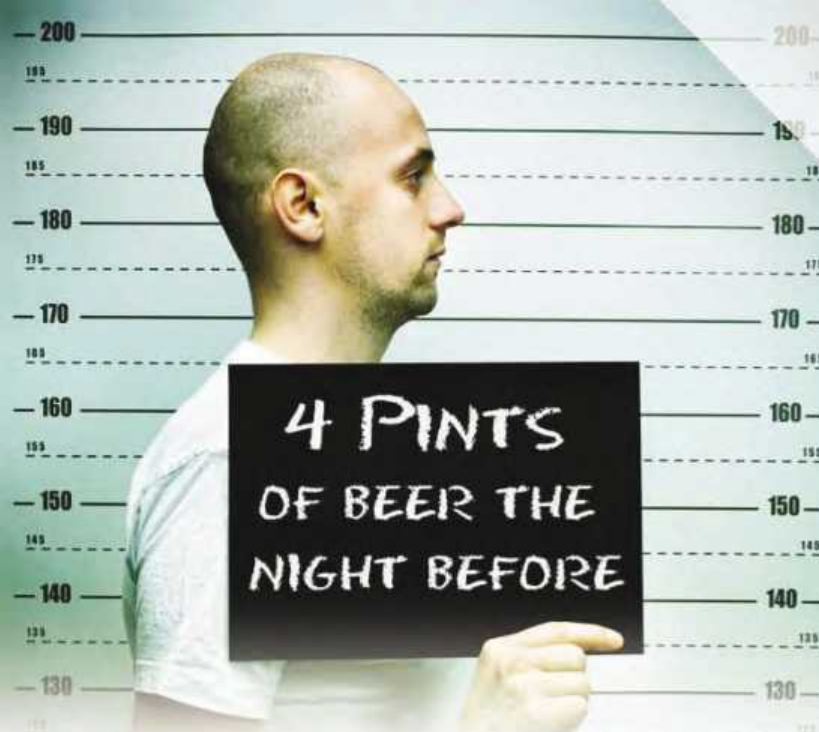


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